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The Politics of Participation: A Study of Water Users Associations in Western India

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**Thesis Submitted for the Examination of D.Phil in
International Development**

**University of Sussex
January 2016**

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or a different form, to this or any other university for a degree.

Signature:

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

SUHAS R BHASME

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE POLITICS OF PARTICIPATION: A STUDY OF
WATER USERS ASSOCIATIONS IN WESTERN INDIA

SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

The thesis investigates the processes of the formation and functioning of Water Users Associations (WUAs) which have been implemented under the policy of Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) in Maharashtra, Western India. The thesis explores (1) how social and economic hierarchies shape the process of participation in WUAs; (2) the roles played by the State and Non-Governmental Organisations in the process of participatory development; (3) the ways in which processes of neo-liberalisation have influenced water reforms in a developing country like India. The study draws on different critiques of neo-liberalism, and it explores theories of participation to provide a holistic understanding of PIM (Participatory Irrigation Management) reforms carried out in Maharashtra. The study uses a qualitative approach, based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out over twelve months at two Water Users Associations in a village in the Nashik district of Maharashtra.

The study finds that processes of participation are complex, and characterized by the vested interests of the different actors involved in the process of the formation and functioning of WUAs in the village. The WUAs have been able to provide water to many farmers in the area. However, the policy has been unable to achieve much success in terms of resolving conflicts among farmers and enhancing the participation of small landholding and marginalized farmers in the WUAs. I found that the process of neo-liberalisation does not challenge or reform traditional institutions such as caste and gender, but rather that it uses them to entrench market reforms. The implementation of WUAs' policy in the wider neo-liberal context has increased the powers of the State and NGO intervention in the formulation and implementation of WUAs policy. Processes of WUAs' formation and functioning are significant examples of the ways in which neo-liberalisation is taking shape in India, including the commodification of water, and thereby, the reproduction of existing hierarchies and power imbalances. The study contributes towards developing an understanding of the wider processes of neo-liberal governance in the water sector.

For my beloved Mother

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Chapter-1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In India, irrigation has always been, and continues to be, a crucial component of agricultural production (Wittfogel, 1957; Whitcombe, 1982; Chambers, 1988; Dhawan, 1998). Traditionally, the irrigation system in India has always been owned, managed and controlled by the state (Chambers, 1988; Singh, 1997; Vaidyanathan A, 1999). In the early stages of Indian independence, in the 1950s through to the 1980s, the state undertook a major water irrigation program. This comprised the construction of large dams and reservoirs to aid the development of agriculture (Mollinga, 2004). The Indian government referred to these dams as 'Temples of Modern India' (Singh, 1997). This state-orchestrated project reflected the growing importance and power of government agencies in India during the 20th century, such as the Irrigation Department (Uphoff, 2000).

In the 1990s, a nationwide initiative of irrigation reform was undertaken in India. A decision was made to transfer the control and management of irrigation systems to local farmers. This trend also coincided with a global process of liberalization of the economy. The scholars supporting the process of liberalization, like Winpenny (1994), suggest that the economic solution to the growing water crisis is to set the appropriate pricing of water. Similarly, Stephen (2002) highlights the inability of the state to manage large irrigation systems, and the growing corruption and inefficiencies in the system. Stephen (2002) suggests that the efficient management of water systems is necessary to address water scarcity problems. Also, in the 1990s, the World Bank popularised the success of participatory models of irrigation management in countries such as Mexico and the Philippines. These models were forerunners in the operation of community-based management structures as a way of achieving the efficient management of irrigation systems (Edwin et al., 2004).

At the same time, the World Bank began to popularise community management structures for irrigation, there was growing disillusionment among Indian farming communities about state intervention, and many communities felt marginalised. The growing environmental concerns favoured a shift towards community-oriented water management practices (Fisher, 1995; World Commission on Dams Report, 2000; Baviskar, 2004). In light of these influences, the Irrigation Department in India decided to introduce the policy of Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT), or as it is popularly known, 'Participatory Irrigation Management' (Jairath, 1999). PIM established new local water institution terms as Water Users Associations (WUAs) managed by farmers (Uphoff, 2000). Mollinga (2002) explains that the purpose of the policy was to allow farmers to exercise control over water situated below the outlet level (Mollinga, 2002).¹ This policy was supported by leading international agencies such as The World Bank and The Asian Development Bank (Singh, 2007). In India, the scheme was adopted in the State of Andhra Pradesh, followed by Maharashtra, Gujarat, and then in other states (Brewer et al., 1999).

Now, after nearly two decades of using PIM, the implications of the policy are beginning to become apparent, and a body of research has developed that reveals local community disenchantment with this participatory model, in most of the countries where it has been adopted (Mosse, 1997; Gujit & Shah, 1998; Kothari, 2002; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Chhotray V, 2004; Chhotray V, 2007). Although, at first, the policy of WUAs was thought to have been 'successful', reports are now emerging that the policy is falling short of meeting its goals (Mollinga and Dooraswamy, 2004; Reddy and Reddy, 2005; Bassi et al., 2009).

In light of these developments, it is important to try to identify and understand what processes and practices have been implemented under the rubric of 'state led community management', and how these processes and practices have been articulated and implemented by farmers. Have farmers been influenced by social and/or political factors, or vice-versa? How do these processes fit in with the process of liberalization of economic policies? Apart from these local

effects one needs to look into the context of the large political economy to understand the processes through that lead to growing economic inequalities in society (Ferguson, 2009; Carswell & De Neve, 2014). This exploration is necessary to analyse the relationship between society and market reforms in the current era.

Using the political context of liberalization of the economy as background, this study aims to analyze and understand how Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) has been adopted and practiced in Western India (in particular in Northern Maharashtra) since the 1990s. It will explore how social and political factors have shaped the formation and functioning of WUAs, and examine the social and political impact of WUAs on the farmers and village communities. I will undertake this endeavour through a comparative study of two WUAs located in the same village in Northern Maharashtra.

This chapter is divided into following sections: research design and criteria for the selection of research sites (1.2), the research methodology adopted for the study (1.3), the scope of the study followed by an overview of the chapters (1.4).

1.2 Research Design

The primary purpose of the study is to understand how far decentralisation of the irrigation sector has enhanced the participation of farmers, especially small land size and marginalised farmers. Secondly, the study aims to explore how far WUAs have been able to address the inequitable distribution of water. The increases in water charges have affected farmers in rural parts of India, and I will focus on two case studies to understand the effects of the increase in water charges on the farmers.

The secondary focus will be the functioning of WUAs in a local context, in a village. Another main area of my focus will be what the Indian Government means when it talks about a 'successful project'. Exploring these areas will help me to understand the way the idea of 'success' is understood by the

policy makers and whether it has been able to accommodate social and economic inequalities and the participation of farmers in the WUAs.

1.2.1 The Research Site

For two main reasons, my study criteria led me to the State of Maharashtra in India. Firstly, Maharashtra has had a history of irrigation reform since colonial times which places emphasis on the participation of farmers in the management of irrigation (Narain, 2003). Secondly, in terms of reform, the State is one of the leading states, next to Andhra Pradesh (Hooja, 2002). Thirdly, the State is considered as a progressive state for the enactment of legislation for enhancing farmers' participation in the management of the irrigation system (Sangameswaran, 2007). The Maharashtra, Management of Irrigation System by Farmers Act-2005 (MMISF Act-2005) is one of the most important steps taken by the State in order to enhance the participation of farmers in the management of the irrigation system.

Within the State of Maharashtra, I selected the Mahabalipur Dam- a medium sized dam in the Nashik district- as a site for investigation. (In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants, I have changed the name of the Dam, Water Users Associations, village and the participants I interviewed.) The Mahabalipur Dam was constructed just downstream of an old earthen dam site on Kolwan River, which is a tributary of river Godavari in the Lakhapur Taluka area in 1979. The dam has a gross storage capacity of 76.5 Million cubic meters, and a live storage capacity of 70 Million cubic meters. The dam provided water in one irrigation year for eight months, with no assured provision for water during summer. The canal network was completed in 1985, and the Mahabalipur system now comprises of the live storage capacity of 2550 Mcft (million cubic feet) served by a 15 km long left bank canal (LBC) and a 45km long Right Bank Canal(RBC).

According to the numerous studies carried out by NGOs, research scholars, and the State, the Mahabalipur project is considered to be a 'successful' project by the State on the following grounds:

Increased irrigated area: The area under irrigation has increased over five years from 14,116 hectares to 14,662 hectares in 2012-13 (Mahabalipur Annual Report 2012-13).

Improved collection of water charges: The collection of charges has been significantly improved to almost 95 to 100% of the charges levied by the irrigation department (Mahabalipur Annual Report 2012-13).

The equitable distribution of water: Meeting the water needs of tail-end farmers. Increased participation of small land holding and marginalised farmers in the management of WUAs. Resolving disputes among farmers.

There are 24 WUAs, and a Federation of WUAs known as the Project Level Association (PLA), that operates the project. The PLA has received many national and international awards for the efficient functioning and distribution of water in the region. Also, the local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) *Samajik Vikas Kendra* (SVK) (i.e. Centre for Social Development) in the area has helped to empower farmers, and has helped in the successful implementation of WUAs in the area. Of the 24 WUAs, four WUAs have received an award from the Government of Maharashtra for being the most successful WUAs in the state.

Within the command area of the project, I selected the Rampur village for the site of my investigations, based on three factors, as follows:

The village plays a key role in providing leadership for the implementation of the policy of WUAs in the area.

The farmers in the village have been active in the process of the implementation of the WUA in the area.

The village has been subject to significant agricultural changes in recent years, including the cultivation of grapes and floriculture.

Rampur has three functioning WUAs that distribute water to the farmers. Of these three WUAs, I decided to select two WUAs that differ considerably in

terms of their size within the command area, and the membership of farmers (For Map of the two WUAs refer to Appendix Two). My idea of carrying out a comparative study on two WUAs in a village was to understand how the factor of size affects the WUA policy of participation among the farmers. The other reason was to look at how political dynamics in the village affect the functioning of the WUAs. The comparative study of two WUAs in a village showed me the way size, political dynamics, and the role of members affect the functioning of the WUAs in the village. Further information about these WUAs and village context will be provided in Chapter Three.

1.3 The Methodology of the Study

In order to understand the impact of socio-economic development on the functioning of WUAs, I carried out fieldwork in the village. This research comprised one year of ethnographic fieldwork, carried out in 2011-12, on the two WUAs. Defining an ethnographic map was not an easy task, and this mapping involved negotiating a complex set of issues. As pointed out by Unnithan-Kumar, the idea of ‘the field’ in fieldwork incorporates the study and interpretation of many different experiences and pieces of information—including childhood memories, and an entire network of social relationships. The idea of ‘the field’ is based on the idea that the researcher can understand his experiences and relate to them (Unnithan—Kumar, 2006).

The ‘field’ of my study comprised my interpretation of ideas about the different relationships that influence the village. I wanted to study what the idea of ‘success’ means for those who run and participate in the Mahabalipur Project, and the reasons for why it has been given high public status as a success story among WUAs across the country. This led me into interactions with farmers, the state, NGOs, and international organisations working in the project area. My ‘field’ comprised not only of the village, but also the irrigation offices at Taluka and District level; the workshops organised by the agricultural department, and research institutes. My ‘field’ comprised both the village of study, and places around it in the district.

The methods I employed for the collection of data were informal interviews and participant observations. I carried out my research alone, without the help of a formal research assistant. This was mainly because I knew the language of my participants. My own personal association with the staff of the WUAs and PLA, especially with Sunil Patil (The Secretary of Lakshmi WUA) and Shantaram Kamble (The *Patkari* (*Patkari stands for 'person who distributes water'*) of Parvati WUA) was of immense help to me in understanding local power dynamics in the village. Also, Ratan Jhoomrey (The Secretary of Project Level Association) helped me obtain information from the PLA office, and provided me with a general outlook on the politics in the region. Sunil accompanied me on some of my initial interviews, because this aided the flow of discussion between me and the participants. The presence of Sunil during the interviews was particularly useful to me when I wanted to observe and interview farmers belonging to the dominant Patil family. This close association with Sunil helped me to make acquaintance with the other farmers, who were mostly members of the dominant Patil family. However, as time went on, my close association with Sunil made it difficult to gain access to farmers belonging to other dominant caste families in the village. Eventually, therefore, I began to carry out interviews by myself.

As an 'outsider' it was important for me to gain trust from the villagers, and this was a slow and gradual process. It was important for participants not to hold any misconceptions about me. Therefore, in order to avoid a cloud of misconception building around me, I approached the head of the most dominant family in the village, who is also one of the most influential members of the WUAs in the village. Through him, I got in touch with staff at the WUA and PLA, and, eventually, they introduced me to farmers in the village. This approach helped me to gain respect and recognition as researcher among the farmers and the bureaucrats.

By using this network of informal help, I was able to undertake 219 interviews with farmers, bureaucrats, NGO workers, and staff at the WUAs and PLA. The landholding size has been categorised as: 0-2 acres, 2-4 acres, 4-6 acres and above 6 acres. The class holding 0-2 acres is small landholding class; 2-6

acres is a medium landholding of farmers' groups, followed by large land size farmers holding 6 acres and above. Most of the farmers in the village belong to the medium and small category. Additionally, I secured interviews with bureaucrats such as the canal inspector; the supervisor of the canal, the Engineer, landless labour, etc. I took notes of the interviews carried out with the farmers and others in the command area. When I was given permission to do so, I also recorded some interviews. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, I have changed the name of the Dam, Water Users Associations, village and the participants I interviewed. The written transcripts mostly comprised farmers' personal stories about their work and lives. I adopted an informal approach with my participants, especially the small holding farmers in the village. With the bigger landowning farmers, it was necessary for me to adopt more formality. This was expected, given the influential status of these landowners in the village. The interviews helped me to discover the issues involved in the processes of WUA policy and its implementation. In addition to this, my interactions with farmers during their day-to-day lives- at market places, tea shops, and at functions in the village- played a vital part in the interviews.

One problem I encountered during my research was that I found it difficult to gain access to speak with women in the village, and I was only able to gather a limited amount of information about their views. It became apparent that the domain of the WUAs belonged to men, and it was men who claimed their own space as experts on water issues. I also found that it was sometimes difficult to speak with young men or sons in a family. The father, as head of the house, always took the initiative to lead the conversation about the issues, and their sons tended only to comment intermittently on any discussions. My efforts to collect household information using a survey did not reap quality information, because the farmers were hesitant to complete the survey. Many questioned the need for a survey, so I decided not to pursue this research method. Instead, I questioned them informally to gain information, and this approach proved more effective. From these conversations, I gathered information about landholding sizes and cultivated crops. This information helped me to piece together a picture of the farmers' economic positions.

Apart from these informal interviews, I found that carrying out participant observations also helped me to understand the complexity of the field. I believe that participant observation is useful because, as noted by Meady (as cited in Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002) observation is an interpersonal act that assesses oneself whilst learning skills in the process of research. These skills include communication skills, observation skills, listening and interaction skills, the ability to remember faces and names, the ability to observe and write simultaneously, etc. I regularly attended meetings of WUAs, the PLA and other functions organised by the Irrigation Department for the farmers. Through these interactions, I was able to understand the way the members of the WUA, the Irrigation Department and NGO interacted with each other. This process also helped me to understand how power politics operates in the institutional spaces occupied by the members. This played out through little acts, such as sharing an opinion on an issue, or by making a suggestion. The participant observations I carried out, especially during water rotation- these are the times when water is supplied to the farmers by the WUA- proved to be useful not only for gaining information about the process of water distribution, but also in establishing my credibility as a serious researcher among the farmers. My long association with the staff at the WUAs eventually made me part of the organisation, which helped me to observe interactions between the members of the Irrigation Department and the staff of the WUAs. I tried to build relationships with the farmers in the village by having tea with them and conversing with them. I believe this helped me to shed my position as a researcher in the eyes of the farmers, and to become part of the village.

My experience made me realize the pertinence of what Elyachar (2005) says about the relationship between ethnographer and the participant; that 'in the field', ethnographers are viewed by their participants through a particular 'lens'. No matter how long the researcher stays in the field, and even when language and culture are shared, participants will have their own independent views of the ethnographers, and these will shape their presentation of the self (Elyachar, 2005). This was appropriate in my case. Even though I am a native Indian research student, I found that it was not easy at first to talk to the participants, and, throughout, there remained a degree of distance, to a greater

or lesser extent. The fact that I was from a city, from an educated family, and pursuing higher education in a foreign country influenced the way I was viewed by the villagers.

At first, some farmers thought I was a government officer conducting a report on the irrigation project. Even when I tried to correct this misconception, the belief persisted among the farmers. Eventually, I gave up attempting to convince the farmers, and I allowed them to think whatever they wished of me, independent of my real position as a researcher in the field. It was only later that I began to realize that this misconception produced a variety of responses from the farmers. Some farmers saw it as an opportunity to share their views about WUAs, while others saw it as an opportunity to build good relations with the WUA by imposing a good image of the WUA and their staff on me. In case of the NGO, I found that the image of a researcher from a university in the UK carried a lot of gravitas. Similarly, I found that my position as a researcher impressed the members of the Irrigation Department. This was more the case with the senior officers of the department, under whose supervision the water policy is implemented in the area. This interaction, under the conditions of the different impressions of my position among the participants, produced rich results.

The other aspect relating to how my position as a researcher was viewed was about caste. In India, being from a lower caste community continues to affect the position of the researcher. There is a significant amount of literature available about the power dynamics that have emerged as a result of the status of the researcher (i.e. due to race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, life opportunities, urban-rural backgrounds, etc. (Karim, 1993, Chacko, 2004).) However, much of this literature is written from a western perspective, and it does not examine the role of caste in Indian society. Also, caste can be different in some ways to the Western concept of class or wealth, and there is often an emotional element attached to the nuances of caste- relating to honour and humility, to name two examples. In India, caste plays a significant role in all aspects of life. It plays a significant role in establishing relationships

between the researcher and research participants, and it affects the way the researcher and the observed view one another.

Caste can be a barrier when a researcher is trying to access information. During my research, it was clear that some participants provided me with false information. I was continuously contesting, negotiating and reflecting back on my experience of the process of trying to build equal relationships with my research informants. At a certain point, owing to caste dynamics, I found myself in a situation of feeling ‘torn’ between the dual identities of being a researcher and being a member of a marginalised group. The power of caste in India emphasizes unequal relationships, and these relationships can be maintained, perpetuated, created, and re-created during and after the process of research, and this was an aspect of the research I struggled with during my fieldwork.

1.4 The Study

In general, my study contributes to the existing debate about water reforms- in particular, irrigation reforms and Participatory Irrigation Management in India. My aim was to understand the processes of the implementation and functioning of these reforms in rural parts of India. This study is one of numerous case studies carried out on water reforms that develop a context-specific understanding of the water reforms. The study looks at participation as one of the important aspects of the irrigation reforms, which determines the success of the reforms. The emphasis on participation inherently includes an understanding of two main aspects of the reforms: the distribution of water, and resolving conflicts among the farmers. Both factors are considered essential to foster participation among farmers in the WUAs.

I have tried to understand the notion of participation among farmers in the WUAs in light of the wider debate that focuses attention on the idea of participation in terms of its meaning and nature (Cooke & Kothari, 2002; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). The study addresses the debate about the nature of participation and the way it is implemented in society. The study addresses the question of whether participation is a form of tyranny that serves to reproduce

unequal social and economic relationships that already exist in society; or whether it is a form of social transformation that provides the individual with the means to collaborate with others and work together to achieve a collective goal.

Should participation be understood as a practical process between different actors, or as a way that power politics and interests are served and articulated? By addressing this debate, the study makes an attempt to move beyond the existing binary that looks at participation as form of tyranny and/or transformation. By undertaking this task, the study makes an attempt to develop a holistic understanding of participation as a process in itself, that concerns different actors and way they articulate and shape the process. I will try to understand the nature of participation in the context of the growing popularity of neo-liberalism and self-rule, which emphasises that individuals need to be free from constraints of control- such as the State- in order to exercise their own free will, and to achieve their own development in society (Harvey, 2005). The idea of neo-liberal governance emphasises that, in a given context, individuals that are given access to adequate information are capable of governing themselves. According to Gordon (1991, p.2) a government can generally be defined as meaning, “conduct of the conduct...a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons.” ‘Govern mentality’ is a new art of government that involves power being exercised at different levels by the governing over the governed agents.

In the respect of the process of liberalization, the study looks at different perspectives of neo-liberalism and academic critiques of it- such as those of Marxist scholars, Polanyi, and feminist critiques- in order to develop a holistic understanding of water reforms in their wider political context. This analysis will try to answer questions such as: How have the farmers adopted the idea of self-rule and participation? How do the farmers, especially the small landholding and marginalised farmers, relate to the idea of participation? Does participation lead to the equitable distribution of resources? Does participation lead to the democratisation of the use of available resources? If yes: how have the water reforms achieved this? Alternatively, if not, why have the reforms

failed to deliver? These questions also lead to thinking about other important aspects of irrigation reforms, such as the collection of water charges, the equitable distribution of water, and resolving conflicts among the farmers.

In India, the timely collection of water charges has been a problem faced by the State since colonial times (Boulding, 1995). It was the British that first suggested the idea of participation, through the use of different commissions (e.g. the Visvesvaraya Commission, 1938) to improve the management of canals and to ensure the timely collection of water charges. Therefore, it can be seen that the roots of neo-liberal policy can be traced back to colonial times in India. Taking this into account, it is interesting to explore the extent to which the WUAs have become a vehicle of neo-liberal reforms: WUA policies have increased the price of water, and accelerated the process of the commodification of water in India. Another aspect of the reforms is the role played by WUAs in the equitable distribution of water among the farmers.

This study examines how WUAs provide access to irrigation water in the area; explores whether or not there has been a transfer of power from the State to the farmers; and whether this has changed the role of the State in the management of the irrigation system. Unlike in the past, when farmers were dependent on the whims and fancies of the Irrigation Department, now farmers deal with WUAs, who work with the Irrigation Department. The WUAs work with the Department to schedule, allocate and distribute water in the area. I will try to understand this process of transformation, and way it changed the role of the State from that of the 'parent' to the collaborator in the process of development.

Lastly, the study of participation brings into the discussion other important aspects of irrigation reform, such as resolving disputes among farmers about the distribution of water. The study looks at the way WUAs resolve disputes, and how the managing committee uses social pressure, legal measures, and social boycotting to compel farmers to obey the rules of the WUAs in the area. The study will explore how the WUA as an institution tries to accommodate social and economic differences that exist among the farmers. By understanding how the local context affects the functioning of the WUAs, it is

possible to explore issues such as caste, class and gender differences that exist in local society. In this endeavour, I have chosen to focus on village life, because as a site for research, the rural village has often been overlooked in favour of studies set in urban areas. This study identifies itself with several recent attempts made by scholars to study rural life in villages (Mines & Yazgi, 2010, Jeffrey & Jeffrey, 2012). The study tries to understand the way caste and class politics in a village can hinder the small landholding and marginalised farmers' access to irrigation water. In this way, the study will show the nuances of the development process in an age of neo-liberalism. Essentially, through the prism of participation, I will seek to understand the implications of a wider economic process of neo-liberal governance and its implications in rural parts of India.

The remainder of the study comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 2 titled “Theorising Participation: Understanding Caste, Class, Gender relations and process of liberalization in the Water sector”. This chapter develops the theoretical framework to answer the main research question, which is: how do social and economic relationships among actors shape the formation and functioning of Water Users Associations in rural parts of India? The chapter broadly discusses three concepts: the process of liberalization, participation, and development. These three inter-related themes are central to the debate about the implementation of the participatory irrigation policy in India. By discussing the concepts of participation, neo-liberalism and water reform, the chapter will develop a framework to understand the process of the decentralization and governance of water in a neo-liberal context. By referring to the ideas of Foucault (2008), I will argue that the ideology of the process of liberalization has a negative impact on social justice. I will illustrate my argument by exploring how the idea of participation is used to sustain and spread neo-liberal policies in the water industry in India. In these circumstances, the use of neo-liberal policies negatively affects the equitable distribution of resources to users, and fails to engage users in meaningful participation.

Chapter 3 titled “Water, Caste and Transformation - Understanding Socio-Economic Changes in the Village as a Result of Water Reform”. This chapter narrates the story of ‘transformation’ in the village, to outline the significance of water reforms that have taken place in the village. The chapter examines social groups that have benefited from the availability of water, and the way reforms have transformed village life. The discussion about the transformation process explores WUAs’ functions in relation to the socio-political environment of an Indian village, and as part of the wider economic and political process in India.

The chapter refers to the research of Mayer (1996), and other relevant studies carried out about the transformation of villages in India, as part of a wider argument about how economic transformation has changed the nature of social and caste relationships in Indian villages (Mayer, 1996; Mines & Yazgi, 2010). Caste has not lost its significance in village life in India. Indeed, as argued by Harris (2001), I find that caste and class continues to form the basis of social and capital articulation among affluent groups in village life. I found that the segmentation of knowledge for particular crop productions is arranged along caste lines. This arrangement mostly benefits upper and middle caste groups, and excludes lower caste groups such as the Dalits (the ex-untouchables). This organisation has segregated farmers according to caste, in terms of the cultivation of different crops in the area. However, transformation in the agricultural sector has not affected the political structure of the village I studied, and the Maratha continue to dominate village politics. As argued by Jeffrey (2000), although caste as an ancient and religiously sanctioned system of resource transfer is in general decline, caste organisation and identity continue to be significant from a social and symbolic perspective for the rural elites.

Chapter 4 titled “The State, Civil Society and WUAs: Understanding the Role of the State and Civil Society in Water Users' Associations (WUAs)”. In this chapter I argue that the WUAs have enhanced the scope of state intervention, rather than having pushed back state intervention. As noted by Foucault, the neo-liberal agenda is not about the state playing a minimal role in policy and

its implementation, but is about the state playing a continuous role in engagement with the market (Fletcher, 2010). This is apparent when the nature of state intervention in WUAs in the irrigation sector is examined: state engagement takes the form of the organisation of the legal system for WUAs; the use of state of technology, and providing administrative, legal, educational, and technical infrastructure assistance to the farmers to form and maintain WUAs. As part of this process, NGOs have financial dependence on the state, and this means that, often, they work with the state to implement policy rather than to drive policy change as agents of transformation.

Chapter 5 titled “The Formation and Functioning of Water Users Associations II: Parvati Water Users Association”. This chapter analyzes the process of the formation and functioning of Parvati WUA located in Rampur. I argue that the policy of participation as promoted by the WUAs has not lead to a meaningful participation on the part of the women and non-dominant caste members in Parvati WUA. As noted by Chatterjee (2004; p.69) participation has become a ‘category of governance’ devoid of real substance.

The chapter presents evidence in the form of observations and interviews carried out during water rotation periods from December 2011 to April 2012. These observations and interviews took place with farmers, and at meetings of the WUA. The chapter will explore the extent to which WUA policy facilitates the empowerment of small land holding farmers, and whether meaningful participation by them in the WUA process is being realised. I employ the theoretical framework that I developed, that critically looks at the process of liberalization that safeguards the interest of the few elites, whilst discriminating against and depriving the poor and the marginalised from securing minimal sources for welfare(Fraser, 2012; Duggan, 2003).

Chapter 6 titled “The Formation and Functioning of Water Users Associations II: Lakshmi Water Users Association”. This chapter analyses the process of formation and functioning of Lakshmi WUAs in the village. This chapter is in line with the previous chapter in terms of the arguments it presents. It shows the way domination is being worked out by the upper-caste male members of the Association. The chapter makes a comparative analysis and shows the

different factors that affect the functioning of the WUA in the command area. The chapter compares narratives of the formation of the WUA, and tries to understand why these narratives differ, and how these different perspectives have affected the functioning of the WUA. Secondly, it compares the two WUAs studied in terms of the size of command area and membership structures to analyse its effects on the functioning of the WUAs. Thirdly, it brings into discussion the role of caste and class factors, and way these elements affect the composition of the WUAs, and thereby, the forms of participation among the members. The chapter refers to the work of Mosse (2005) which understands the way development projects sustain these social relationships, in terms of caste and class hierarchies, in the process of producing a successful model that can be replicated in other places.

Chapter 7 titled “Caste, Class, Migrants and WUAs: Understanding and analysing the process of Water Distribution by WUAs”. The chapter is about the water disputes that are resolved by WUAs trying to understand the way caste and other issues affect the farmers’ access to irrigation water. In this chapter, I argue that the existence of disputes in the command area shows that the idea of co-operation among the farmers is not, in reality, being fostered, and that rich and dominant farmers continue to reap the benefits of a system that marginalises the voices of the small landholding farmers.

The idea of farmer co-operation is the ideology on which WUAs sustain their existence, but, in reality, it is a process of asymmetrical gains- where dominant and rich farmers benefit; and where the smaller landholding farmers lack the means to build influential networks. Different strategies are used by the large land owning farmers and small land owning farmers to maintain access to irrigation water, and farmers perceive the process of the increasing water charges differently. The increasing costs of irrigation affect the options small farmers have, in terms of their livelihood and the crops they can cultivate.

Throughout this chapter, I explore whether PIM is a form of tyranny because it does not challenge existing social norms or economic structures, and because it continues to offer privilege to the rich and powerful. However, I also

consider that participation is not always about absolute power, and there is space for negotiation for the less powerful, continually devising new and innovative strategies for expressing their agency in development arenas (Hickey & Mohan, 2004). However, as can be seen in the case studies, the farmers' capability to negotiate is not independent of existing caste and class structures in the village: farmers from the Dalit community lack both social capital and economic capital, and thus fall behind in the race to negotiate access to irrigation water. In a way, the process of negotiation is asymmetric, and dependent on an individual's caste and class position.

An analysis of the disputes shows how the two WUAs function to resolve a conflict among the farmers, and what factors determine the capability of a WUA to resolve conflict in their command area. I will explore the extent to which the institution operates as a vehicle for resolving conflicts between farmers (Pranjape, 2008).

Chapter 8 titled "Maintaining Upper Caste Dominance: Land Acquisition, Caste Discrimination and Party Politics". The chapter focuses on looking beyond the WUAs to explore how the commodification of water affects the wider strategies of land acquisition and caste discrimination practiced by the upper castes. In order to understand this phenomenon, I engage with literature that looks at how water is a link between people, and how water is a medium through which various social and political dimensions are acted out (Mehta, 2005). I argue that the formation of WUAs does not challenge social dominance; but, rather- it provides a new avenue for the dominant to enhance their domination in other areas. In a way, the WUAs have become new sites of contestation or alliances between local castes, and for disputes and/or factional affiliations which challenge, retain, or enhance caste power. This study shows that, as argued by Baviskar (2007) that struggles over water are simultaneously struggles for power over symbolic representations and material resources. This shows that managing a collective resource such as water is a source of power.

Chapter 9 is the conclusion chapter. In this chapter I sum up my findings about three key aspects of water reforms: accessibility to water, resolving disputes

among farmers, and, lastly, the participation of small landholding and marginalised farmers in projects in the area. Additionally, I outline the limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter- 2

Theorising Participation: Understanding Caste, Class, Gender relations and process of liberalization in Water sector

2.1 Introduction

This chapter develops the theoretical framework to answer the main thesis research question, which is: how do social and economic relationships among actors shape the formation and functioning of Water Users Associations in rural parts of India? The chapter discusses the concept of participation, water reforms, the process of liberalization, and its relation with social and economic transformation. It then eventually develops into a framework that enables understanding the process of governance and distribution of water in the irrigation sector. By referring to Foucault's idea of power as '*being everywhere*' and '*com[in] from everywhere*' (Foucault, 1998, 63), I will argue that participation in itself is a form of power being exercised by the different individuals and groups in their capacity, on the basis of limited economic and social resources, to channel their demand in the institutions. Participation is a process that takes place throughout the institution enabling the dominant to increase domination; at the same time leaving space for the marginalized to exercise their power in one or the other way to challenge, negotiate and resist the power of the other dominant groups.

The chapter is divided into three broad sections, and it will discuss the concepts of participation, neo-liberalism and water reforms. These three inter-related themes are central to the debate about the implementation of participatory irrigation policy in India. The first section comprises a discussion about the notion of participation (2.2). This section explores the debate on participation in terms of a more general discourse, eventually leading to observations on the way participation is being practiced in reality. The second section will explore the impact of the process of liberalization in the water sector globally and, particularly, in the case of India, in terms of policy

changes in the water sector (2.3). This is followed by a section discussing caste, class and gender relations and their interrelationships in society. In this section, I put forth discussion about the way the process of liberalization has transformed the nature and form of domination exercised by the dominant caste groups in rural parts of India (2.4). Finally, it will conclude with a summary of the discussion, and will outline the theoretical framework of the study (2.5).

2.2 The Rise of the Ideology of ‘Participation’

The aim of this section is to provide an overall idea of discourse on participation in terms of its emergence, implementation and practice; eventually developing understanding of participation in relation water reform in India.

Participation has been a high agenda for international organizations like World Bank and United Nations for last two decades. The World Bank has gone to and fro on the idea of participation for different programs such as the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in the 70s-80s, to programs of economic stability and reformation in the 90s, etc. (World Bank, 1982, 1983). Simultaneously, the UN conference in Stockholm in 1972 on the Human Environment raised the concerns among the international community in terms of the degradation of natural resources, and the impact of that on society. The growing consensus among the international community eventually leads to the adoption of the World Charter for Nature in 1982. This addresses the role of participation in the environmental field (UN, 1982). However the notion of participation was strongly forced only in the 1990s, both by the United Nations and the World Bank, under the emerging agenda of governance. The notion of popular participation as stated by the Human Rights Conference organized by the UN is ‘The principle by which individuals and people collectively determine their needs and priorities and ensure the protection and advancement of their rights and interests.’ (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1990) It seems that the practical implementation of the notion of participation through its development programs is mostly sponsored and

implemented by big international institutions like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and others in the countries of Asia and Africa.

Participation in the 1990s for the Bank seems to achieve 'effectiveness in terms of management of resources' by making development process more inclusive and pro-poor. This eventually leads to a resurgence of reports by the Bank enhancing participation in different programs, especially in the management of natural resources such as forest and water (World Bank, 1992, 1994). The issue highlighted by these reports was the inability of the State-controlled system to address the growing corruption, unequal distribution of resources and exclusion of the poor and marginalized sectors in the process of development (World Bank, 1990). However, it seems that the Bank realized the limitation of its own agenda of participation for the development- merely increasing the efficiency of the system for the selected few powerful elites, without taking into consideration the system as a whole and the individuals involved in the process. As pointed out by the World Bank report (2013), titled *'Localizing Development 'the donor-driven development focused on ' institutional structure continues to drive from a focus on capital -intensive development and reconstruction. Building dams, bridges, and roads, or even schools and clinics, is a much more predictable activity than changing the social and political system. Repairing civil society and political failure requires a shift in the social equilibrium that derives from a change in the nature of social interactions and form modifying norms and local culture. These much more difficult tasks require a fundamentally different approach to development -one that is flexible, long-term, self-critical and strongly infused with the spirit of learning and doing'*(World Bank, 2013, p.13). Following the spirit of 'learning by doing', the Bank highlights structured interventions that look at transforming the social norms and politics of the society. I assume, however, that it will be too early to make a statement that 'the age of development without politics' is coming to an end, and finally participation or decentralization is being driven by democratic concerns.

From theory to practice: Participation and development

Reflecting on the transformation in the discourse on participation, the following studies show the way participation was adopted in practice, in reality, and in the challenges it faced. Many programs launched in newly emerging economies of Asia and Africa eventually included this component of participation only in name's sake, without much understanding of it in the given local context. The model of participatory development criticised mostly in the academic world. The criticism largely consists of the idea in itself; its assumptions; the methods implied in the process, and questioning its application in terms of transferring local knowledge for the formulation of policy, enhancing accountability and transparency of the local institutions, etc.(Mosse,2001,Harrison,2002, Agrawal and Chhatre, 2008). Participation was labeled popularly as a form of 'tyranny', means-justifying the unequal social and economic relations among the participants (Cook and Kothari, 2001). Some of the significant criticism of the idea of participation are stated as follows: Mosse's (2001) study on the South Indian Tanks system. Mosse's (2001) study challenges the idea of participatory development as an idea that builds upon a wealth of local knowledge. He argues that planners and policy implementers do not give due consideration or recognition to locals for the expertise and knowledge they contribute to the process of water distribution. He suggests that this knowledge often remains on the periphery, and it is the government planner who has the most impact and recognition.

Similarly, Harrison (2002), in her work on natural resources policy in Ethiopia, highlighted the inability of the development discourse to take into consideration ; firstly, the local context of hierarchical relationships between the state bureaucracy, secondly, the relationship between the NGOs and the state, and lastly, the relations between the NGOS themselves- mostly; the international institutions, which is highly contested and conflicted. In light of these contradictions and contestations, Harrison argues that most of the time the arena of participation becomes a terrain of contestation and negotiations between the actors themselves, which explains the gap between the theory and practice of participatory policy. In terms of the actors involved, it seems that

the notion of participation envisaged by the institutions like the World Bank was a more homogenous view of the community that overlooks the heterogeneity between the groups participating in the program along lines of race, class and gender. The work of Gujit and Shah (1998) demonstrates the way the idea of community as a homogenous entity, being guided by our perception of development, is misleading and- most importantly- a misconception about the society. Gujit and Shah (1998), understanding different development programs implemented across the world, bring forward the issue of 'gender blindness' being maintained by these development programs. It argues that there be no such thing as a homogenous community, and there persist different interests among the people involved in it regarding marked caste, class, race, and gender differences in society. This lack of limited understanding of participation and the prevalence of the concept of 'community' as a homogenous entity proved to be unable to accommodate the different interest in a participatory development model, gradually leading to the exclusion of women and marginalized sectors in the process of development (Agarwal.2001).

One needs to understand that studies carried out on local governance in other contexts have shown the significance of this symbolic representation in terms of enhancing the power of the marginalized groups in society. For example, the study carried out by Baviskar et al. (2009) on the local panchayats in India, shows the way the marginalized groups, as well as women, have been able to utilize the limited space of local governing institutions in terms of exercising their will and challenging the domination of the dominant groups in the society. The study shows that even a small act, such as a seating on a chair by the lower caste head of Panchayat, has significance in a society marked by greater inequalities of caste division and oppression in a society like India. The other suggestion to make these institutions more democratic, by scholars like Agrawal and Chhatre (2008), demands the legalization of such institutions, and having a consistent bias towards the poor and marginalized in the society in the form of an affirmative action in these local institutions. At another level, the agenda of decentralization or participation reforms the existing relations between the state and the society. However, it

is observed that, as pointed out by Baviskar, '*villagers and lower-level bureaucrats bring diverse agendas and perspectives to bear on development projects, co-opting newly-created institutions of decentralized management and assimilating them into ongoing individual and collective projects of social survival and gain.*' (Baviskar, 2004,p.2)

In a way, one finds that its complexity marks the discourse of participation regarding issues of power and politics. In this study, an attempt is made to distance oneself from judging whether participation is right or wrong, and from understanding the factors that make it effective. For me, power and politics are integral parts of the process of the building of institutions. Hence, one needs to understand the process of the stabilization of an institution about power and politics, and not in isolation from it. By being a mere spectator of the performance of power, we can understand the nature of power, considering it as '*be[ing] everywhere*' and '*com[ing] from everywhere*' (Foucault, 1998, 63). Participation, for me, is not just an egalitarian idea that promises to transform the existing inequalities in power relations. Participation in itself is a form of power being exercised by the dominant groups in their capacity, to corner their interest in the institutions. In this scenario, the ability of the marginalized to exercise his or her power is limited, leaving little or no space to either to negotiate or resist the power of the other dominant groups. The study is about the way the process of participation is influenced by social and economic transformation, enabling or hindering the involvement of the marginalized groups, and increasing the control held by the dominant caste groups in institutions.

2.3 Participation, process of liberalization and Water Reforms

In this section, I will discuss the varied literature that touches on the different aspects of the process of water reforms and the emergence of the idea of the management of water in different parts of the world followed by a discussion on water reforms in India. Then, I will discuss the perception of the success of these reforms and the critical literature that challenges the success of the reforms. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of these perspectives and raise

questions about the process of the implementation of irrigation reforms in India.

Water reforms have been of primary concern for the international community for a long time. It was early in the 70s when one of the first United Nations Conferences on Water was held at Mar del Plata, Argentina. The goal of the conference was to assess the status of water supplies; to ensure that an adequate supply of quality of water was available to meet the planet's socio-economic needs; to increase the efficiency of water usage, and to promote preparedness- nationally and internationally- so as to avoid a water crisis of global dimensions before the end of twentieth century (Rahaman& Varis, 2005). The conference eventually set up the concerns that continue to form the basis of other conferences and forums addressing the growing scarcity of the water. According to Biswas, the conference at Mal del Plata was an important yardstick in terms of setting the scene for the implementation of the larger concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), later to be adopted in most developing countries (Biswas, 2004).

In the 1990s, learning from the experience of the Mal del Plata conference, an international organization was set up to start active participation in terms of the management of water. It was an International Conference on Water and Environment organized in Dublin that eventually set the future agenda for the water reforms. As noted by Budds (2004), reforms that emphasize the principle of cost recovery; the setting up of water rights; participation; decentralization; the privatization of some or all functions of water delivery, and the re-definition of the role of the government all stem, at least in part, from the Dublin-Rio Principles conference held in 1992. The Dublin-Rio Principles, which include the Dublin Declaration, were enunciated at the International Conference on Water and the Environment held in Dublin in 1992. Agenda Item 21 makes recommendations that were adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in the same year. Among the four Dublin principles, two are particularly pertinent to the discussion of water reforms globally: the call for the increased participation of users, planners and policy-makers at all levels of water development and management, and the call for the recognition of water

as an economic good, with an economic value in all its competing uses (ICWE, 1992). Agenda Item 21 also emphasizes the importance of delegating water resource management at the lowest appropriate level. However, unlike the Dublin Principles, it stresses that water is both an economic and social good (UNCED, 1992). Therefore, these two principles correspond to ideas about governance and commodification that eventually occupy a central place in the current academic debate about water reforms. On the line of Dublin Principle, the water reforms are about enhancing the participation of the users in the management of the water, increasing the price of water, and regulating the use of water, etc.

Following the concerns expressed at the Dublin conference, the Second World Water Forum & Ministerial Conference was organized in 2000 at Hague, Netherlands. The conference's major achievement was that, for the first time, it brought a mixed crowd, consisting of inter-governmental participants, experts, and a range of stakeholders related to water management from the developing and developed world. The Ministerial conference, learning from the past, understood water as a shared resource which needed to be managed collectively by the state, civil society and the beneficiaries of the use of the water. The suggestion of the conference fitted well into the theme 'Making Water Everybody's Business', recognizing everyone's needs of water and, at the same time, handing them the responsibility in terms of management of water. By doing this, the conference recognized the collaborations between the different stakeholders, partners, innovators of more technological advancements and organizational innovations, new forms of the governance of water, to ensure an efficient management of the water. (Shen & Varis, 2000)

However, it was only in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, organized in Johannesburg in 2002, that laid the guidelines and targets for the formulation of the IWRM in most of the countries. It encouraged the formulation of national and regional strategies to implant the plans for the sustainable and efficient use of water across, across all its different uses. The IWRM, in a way, eventually laid the seeds for the formulation of the policy of Participatory Irrigational Management (PIM) - becoming popular in 2000-

introduced by the World Bank in most developing countries. The UN-Water Council, formed in 2003, reflected most of the concerns expressed over a long time by the international forum. The UN-Water Council adequately recognized the need of IWRM and the environmental governance, making governance a concern involving all stakeholders, including state, civil society, the market, and the users of the system. The UN-Water Council, adequately recognizing the growing significance of the collaboration, declared the International Decade 2005-2015 as 'Water for life', campaigning for issues of water distribution, management and quality of water across the sectors (UN, Water Council Annual Report 2007). The effect of this continuous deliberation and discussion over water in the international forum was two-fold: firstly, it gave due recognition to the users in terms of the management of the resource, and opportunity to participate in terms of the management and distribution of water. Secondly, it made water an economic good, devoid of its social and cultural aspects. Most of the leading international donors, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank (WB), and others, continue to recognize water as an economic good in its lending policies. It is this second aspect of water as an economic good that has become a contentious issue among the activists.

The PIM approach can be considered as a continuation of the IWRM approach, in terms of considering water not merely as a state subject, but as a shared responsibility of all the stakeholders in the region. It encourages the collaboration of different stakeholders in the management of water. According to the 1984 FAO "Expert Consultation" on Participatory Experiences in Irrigation Water Management, the desired role of farmers was outlined as follows: "The farmers...must organize themselves to deal with water scheduling, distribution, system operation and maintenance and related issues of distribution of work, assessment and collection of farmers' contributions. The timely and efficient interaction of the organizations of water users with local authorities, irrigation agencies and agricultural extension services is another factor of major importance" (FAO 1985, p. 1). The policy of PIM is considered to be necessary for two important reasons. Firstly, it is efficient in terms of cost-benefit analysis, as the reduced cost incurred by the maintenance

of the system is transferred to the users. Secondly, through the participation of the users, it is made more acceptable and convenient for the farmers to manage it at a local level. It avoids undue interference by the state officials, giving farmers more control over the water they use.

This significant shift in the discourse on water from a 'social good' to an 'economic good' reveals the growing influence of liberalization on water reforms across the globe. The form of decentralization encouraged by the PIM rests on the claims made by the liberal view of the economy, i.e. that minimal intervention by the state leads to more participation on the part of the users, especially the marginalised groups (Deshpande & Narayanmoorthy, 2001). State intervention needs to take into account within the larger framework of political and economic change, that insists on the state reducing subsidies on the resources, and opening the markets of natural resources for international lending agencies (Bolding & Mollinga, 2004).

In India, the irrigation of water has never been under the direct control of one particular group or agency. A look at the process of development of irrigation in India shows that it is characterized by shifts in control and domain management. In ancient times, local communities exercised control and management over their systems (Agarwal & Narian, 1997). However, under the British occupation of India, considerable changes were made to the management of India's water irrigation system: the British were the first to organize the enterprise of water irrigation as a revenue-collecting enterprise. During their colonial occupation of India, the British took charge of the administration of India and they replaced many traditional systems of management throughout the country (Singh, 1997). The British created and maintained an army of people to regulate the system of dams, and the regular collection of revenue from peasants (Singh, 1997). Over a period, a specialized bureaucratic arm strongly emerged to manage the complexity of the irrigation system.

After independence, India continued the colonial tradition of maintaining a centralized bureaucracy to manage the irrigation system. In this era, the power and trust endorsed by the new India on bureaucracy were enormous

(Chambers, 1988). Montgomery tends to glorify the idea of bureaucratic intervention, and claims that “bureaucratic populism is neither a form of exploitation nor the rendering of public services but rather an instrument for creating conditions under which citizens become qualified to participate in both the process and the fruits of development.”(Montgomery, 1988, p.8) It demonstrates that the rationality of the bureaucratic approach continued to influence the management of the irrigation system in India for a significant period, even after the end of the British colonial era. However, in the 1990s, ecological and grassroots movements emerged- both within India and globally- to highlight some of the limitations of large-scale bureaucratic intervention (Baviskar, 1999). Many of these groups claimed to speak from the perspective of the poor and marginalized in society, and these movements propagated and popularized the idea that all people should be participants and partners in the process of development rather than being mere recipients of, or subjects of, the state’s development policy (Baviskar, 2004). This shift in approach also emerged as the result of changes made by the United States of America to its Indian Aid policy adopted in 1987. These changes placed emphasis on the role of the people in the administrative management of their country’s systems (Montgomery, 1988).

The partnership approach supported by leading international institutes such as the World Bank, the United Nations, the Stockholm International Institute of Water, the World Water Forum and others, which demands participation from the state, civil society and private sector in terms of the management of natural resources. As a result, there has been a global movement away from a central water management system, towards decentralization in terms of the management of water. This is strongly evident in the World Bank study on India’s water infrastructure, which emphasizes the role of decentralization in addressing uneven rainfall pattern due to climate change, and the increasing scarcity of water supplies, both in rural, as well as urban areas (Briscoe & Malik, 2006). The development of infrastructure should be associated with the change in the manner of governance of water resources and water services, highlighting the role of the market in the water sector. Secondly, it emphasizes

introducing incentive-based and participatory regulations involving locals in the management of the project (Briscoe & Malik, 2006).

The trend towards the gradual shift, from state-centralized bureaucracy to participation and partnership, was initially welcomed in India by grassroots movements. This new approach compelled policy makers to consider the knowledge and needs of a wider group of people in the process of policy formulation. Reforms to the irrigation sector in India are the offshoot of progressive thinking that developed over a long period. Although in the case of Andhra Pradesh, irrigation reforms were implemented using a top-down approach, the state eventually played a large role in the implementation of the reforms (Narayanmoorthy & Deshpande, 2005). In the case of Maharashtra, reforms were gradually developed using different policies and commissions, enacted by the state over a period. These reforms were administered using a bottom-up approach (Narayanmoorthy & Deshpande, 2005).

Most of the studies carried out on water reforms- globally, as well as in India- especially in the irrigation sector, seem to be guided by the economic discourse that foregrounds the role of the users in terms of the management and the efficient use of water (Deshpande, 2004, Joshi & Hooja, 2000; Kadiri et al, 2009). The following section discusses a few studies carried out at the global level, followed by studies carried out in India. The first section deals with studies that consider the reforms successful, and state various factors that contributed to the success of the reforms. This is followed by studies that look at the political and social aspect of the reforms, discussing the role of the state, NGOS, and the process of the commodification of the water.

'Success' of the Reforms:

A comparative study of two States (Rajasthan and Karnataka) by Meinzen-Dick et al. (2000) explores the conditions, under which users can be organized to take part in irrigation management and suggests that 'water supply (indicated by head/middle/tail location in the system) is not a major constraint' (Meinzen-Dick et al. 2000: p.139). It argues that the size of the command area, and its distance from the market, plays a significant role in

the formation of associations. This may be because easy accessibility to the market provides opportunities for farmers to make the process of irrigation profitable, unlike the sites located away from the market. Factors such as social capital and the leadership provided by influential persons in villages also play an important role in the formation of associations.

Additionally, traditional leadership from influential persons in the village, as well as the presence of college graduates, seems to have a positive effect on the organization of irrigation.

A similar study carried out by Paranjapye and Joy (2003) on WUAs in the Ozar Dam area, situated in the Nashik area of Maharashtra, notes the importance of local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) known as *SamajParivartan Kendra*, and local leadership, in the formation and functioning of associations. Not only physical factors, like water scarcity, affect the formation of the organizations, but also networking- carried out by NGOs among farmers- together with visionary leadership, helps to reduce the transactional costs and time required to make negotiations and contracts with members. As observed by Deshpande (2004), most WUAs in India are formed by NGOs.

Narain (2003) understands that the formation and functioning of associations are achieved by adopting a *socio-technical* approach. Narain argues that collective action in canal irrigation is mostly shaped by both technology and social relations: 'collective action is a socio-technical process' (Narain , 2003; p.211). Narain makes an effort to understand the success of the WUAs in light of technological changes and socio-economic relationships among farmers. He discusses the experience of instituting WUAs, through the detailed case studies of two large-scale surface irrigation projects in Maharashtra and Haryana in India. He makes an attempt to understand the institutional feasibility of WUAs in terms of the relationships among the members, and the relationship between the WUAs and irrigation bureaucracy as influenced by the geo-physical terrain, and design characteristics of canals and outlets. Narain's research argues that, 'the design characteristics of canal irrigation play a critical role in influencing the extent to which WUAs can affect water

management and distribution practices and alter relations of power and dominance between the irrigation bureaucracy and users' (Narain, 2003: p.220).

These studies state the different factors that contribute to the success of the reforms in terms of the role played by local leadership; the role played by the community in terms of enhancing co-operation among the farmers; the role played by the NGOs in terms of dispersing information among the farmers and cutting down costs in terms of human interactions, and the tradition of co-operation between the farmers, etc. This approach places emphasis on the collective efforts of villagers, NGOs and State agencies, rather than the political processes undergone in the formation of the WUAs. The necessity is to unpack this 'glossy' image of the formation and functioning of WUAs at the community level; looking at the political processes taken in terms of formation and functioning of the WUAs, in the given context.

Social-political approach to the water reforms:

The notion of 'success' as claimed by the reformers seems to be a debatable and ambiguous issue, and needs to be contested in light of literature that discusses the political and social aspects of the reforms. Studies that highlight potential economic gains from the reforms often overlook the social and political impact of the reforms. Simultaneously, these studies remain silent about issues such as increased water rates among farmers, empowerment, and conflict resolution. These studies tend to ignore the impact of water reforms on existing power relationships in communities. Recently, however, more literature has emerged that engages with the reform process from a political-social viewpoint, to try to understand critically the role played by the different actors as part of the larger political economy. I engaged with the literature and studies produced about water reform, especially irrigation reforms, in order to develop a better understanding of the reforms.

Assumptions underlying the need for the effective management of water have been contested in recent times. These challenges include the work by Mehta, who in *'The Politics and Poetics of Water'* argues that "water scarcity cannot

be merely viewed as a 'natural phenomena'- instead it's embedded in the social and power relations shaping water use and practices as well as local culture and history must be made explicit."(2005, p. ix). Similarly, Selby (2003) interrogates the handling of the water crises during Israeli-Palestinian conflicts and notes the limitations of the discourses on ecology and technology, because they ignore and undermine larger political factors that shape water crises. He emphasizes the need to look at the historical legacy of political factors, such as the formation of the State of Israel, and the Oslo peace process, in order to understand water crises in the region. In his most recent study, he challenges the idea that a scarcity of water leads to water conflict (Selby, 2014). By investigating the nature of political and economic development in Sudan, he argues that it is not necessarily scarcity, but an abundance of resources that leads to conflict among people. Also, it is important to look for other factors, such as the development of political formations that guide the use of resources and thereby affect their availability to users.

More such critical studies carried out challenge the 'success' of the reforms and raise concerns about the ideology that underpins the nature of the reforms. These studies explore the politics behind reform in terms of the global, political, and economic, as well as in a local context. One of these studies carried out by Mollinga and Boulding (2004) *The Politics of Irrigation Reform* comprises a collection of studies on Irrigation Management Transfer (IMT) reforms undertaken in different parts of the world. This study adopts a socio-political approach towards examining policy formation to show that the 'success' of policy implementation depends on the social and political context in which it is implemented. Policies are affected by the different actors involved in the process. The reforms introduced by the state and lending agencies do not take in to consideration the users, or the way it will affect the current pattern of use of the resources, thereby negating the voice of the users in the process of the management of water.

Taking this socio-political approach a step further, Rap (2006) talks about irrigation reforms carried out in Mexico, and makes an effort to understand the

success of the reforms. Rap argues that the conditions set out for success are generalized conditions, which promote the sense of a win-win situation for the state, the international organizations and the NGOs involved in the process of formulating and implementing the reforms. Rap (2006) claims the reforms conceal the political nature of the transfer process and user management system. He argues that, *“a particularly effective aspect of neo-liberal policy discourse, as exemplified in the model, is the way in which it celebrates the success of what is actually to a large extent a painful cost-cutting operation. The model glorifies those policies and its advocates in language and imagery that are full of a kind of heroic euphoria: ‘champions of reform’, ‘strong government commitment’, ‘win-win situations’, ‘self-sufficiency, and a ‘Big Bang’”* (Rap, 2006, pg. 1309). Rap suggests that this de-politicization occurs through the interpretation of IMT as way of enabling effective service provision, which is usually understood as, essentially, a technical task.

Budds (2004) study on irrigation reforms in Chile suggests that reforms implemented in the neo-liberal framework do not succeed in giving small landholding peasant farmers access to the command area. Budds (2004) notes that the reform appears benefiting the big landowning farmers, who continue to dominate the process of allocation and distribution of water in their areas.

2.4 Caste, Class and Gender debate: Understanding Neoliberalism and socio-economic Transformation

It would be interesting to look into the relationship between caste and class domination that shapes the current phase of the process of liberalization, and its effect on water reforms carried out in India. The term 'process of liberalization' stands for a *larger socio-economic and cultural specific oriented process that tend to hegemonies the economic and cultural systems in a market-oriented way, eventually strengthening the capitalistic production system and enlarging the disparity between the classes as well as other identities such as race, caste, gender, ethnicity, etc.* (Carswell & De Neve, 2014). The use of the term 'process of liberalization' provides more insight into the actual process shaping the lives of the people.

In light of the above definition of the process of liberalization, it is important to understand the way larger economic changes have influenced the social change in India. The relation between caste, class and gender in terms of social change has been widely debated amongst academics and activists, both across the world as well as in India. The debate has raised questions about the intentions of movements such as feminism and caste politics as being temporal, as well as representing the interests of the petty bourgeoisie. These struggles on issues of caste and patriarchy are termed as anti-Marxists that challenges or, to say more specifically, distorts the efforts to integrate all social phenomena into “class” analysis or narrowly defined concepts of “mode of production”, “economic base”, and the like. It becomes important to locate the intersectional link between these three identities, which helps in understanding the cultural as well as the economic complexity of the process of liberalization carried out across the world, and especially in India.

The discussion on dominant caste in rural parts of India reflects these concerns of social and economic change, raising two important questions: what constitutes a dominant caste? Moreover, what are the means by which domination is being increased or sustained by a particular group in a local context?

The idea of dominant caste as defined by Srinivas is as follows: 'A caste may be said to be “dominant” when it is a preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can more easily be dominant if its position in local hierarchy is not too low.' (Srinivas, 1955;8). It is clear that the idea of dominant caste as stated by Srinivas constitutes both social as well as economic power in the form of land held by a particular group in a given context. Although we find that Srinivas, in his later writings on Ramapura, extends the idea of domination. To put it in his own words: 'an element of dominance [...] is becoming increasingly important in rural India, namely, the number of persons in a caste and the occupations that they pursue (Srinivas, 1959; 1).

In later studies carried out more profoundly in post-independent India, understanding the domination clearly de-links the relationship between

domination and land. Some of these studies, discussed below, clearly show that the domination exercised by a particular caste group is an outcome of a number of factors- of which land is a significant one; but not the only one.

In a study carried out by Craig Jeffrey (2000) on agrarian elite- mostly comprising of Jats in Western Uttar Pradesh- he points out the strategies used by the Jats to sustain, as well as to enhance their domination over the others in the villages of the western Uttar Pradesh. Jeffrey points out that historically, the lack of an effective state and the failure of state intervention in terms of equitable distribution of resources among the marginalized sections has led to increased feelings of deprivation among the lower caste groups in the villages. In these conditions, the process of democratization has enhanced the caste-consciousness of lower castes, which refute the domination of the Jats, resulting in frequent incidences of caste violence in the state. In such conditions, as in other parts of the world, police have become a highly political force, seeking their own material interest by intervening on the side of the powerful rather than the marginalized. In such conditions, one's access to local police acts as a deterrent in the minds of others- especially lower caste groups- thereby increasing one's domination in the village. The Jats, in this part of the region, incorporate a strategy to encounter the increasing resistance offered by the lower caste groups- especially untouchables- by building a network of the local police force in the villages. Jeffrey points out that, in the case of economic changes, the lower caste- unlike in the past- is not very dependent on the Jats in terms of employment. The accessibility to the jobs in the nearby town areas of Meerut provides employment opportunities to the lower-caste people outside of the village.

The change in social, economic and political conditions of lower caste groups has resulted in conflicts between the two groups over the disputes of land, wages, etc. The members of the untouchable community in the village do not hesitate to raise their voice against the dominant caste groups- such as the Jats- in the case of their committing injustices. In such cases, the Jats use their relationship with the police to curb the opposition raised by the lower-caste farmers in the village. The Jats' popular practice is to build up either family

relationships with police officers, by marrying their daughters to the local police officers, or developing friendly relationships with the police officers by inviting them to dinner parties held at home. These practices of the Jats had eventually given them an access to power to keep a check on the untouchables in the villages. The untouchable groups succumb to the threat of violence used against them. In a way, Jeffrey points out that Jats' access to police officers have played a key role in light of changing socio-economic conditions, in terms of maintaining the domination over others- especially the lower-caste group in the village.

The new means used to enhance and sustain one's domination is also highlighted by a study carried out by Jeffery & Jeffery (2005), which examines the role of education in reproducing the caste and class inequalities in the villages in Bijnor district, in Uttar Pradesh. The study observes that deteriorating conditions of government schools- especially upper-primary and secondary- in terms of provision of quality education to rural areas has led to the proliferation of a large number of private schools in the villages in Uttar Pradesh. It has eventually affected the access of the poor and marginalized class, consisting mostly of Dalits, Muslims and others, in terms of access to secondary schools. On the other hand, the local dominant caste group, the Jats, who own a good amount of land and wealth, have been able to maintain their access to secondary education in these private schools. It is on the basis of this access to secondary education, and eventually using the social and cultural capital created by the Jats, on the basis of their wealth, that helps them to secure government jobs for their sons in the region. In the case of lower caste, such as Dalits, most of them being a poor and marginalized class, do not have the ability to teach their sons beyond class V in private schools. It automatically excludes them from jobs in the private sector, which requires a minimum class VIII qualification, and from government jobs, which require a class X. A few Dalit families, who were able to secure the benefits of the Green Revolution in terms of acquiring farm jobs, educated their children in these private schools, and helped their sons to secure a salaried job in government, as well as in the private sector. However, the rate of success of these few Dalit families, in terms of securing a salaried job for their children,

falls, owing to a lack of necessary social and cultural capital. So only a few of the educated Dalit families have been able to acquire a secured-salary job, leaving the vast majority of the community unemployed and dependent on farm jobs.

In a way, Jeffery & Jeffery point out that '*there was, therefore, a mutually reinforcing relationship between forms of social advantage based upon access to educational facilities and salaried work and older forms of dominance rooted in control over land, access to urban social networks, and privileged position within the Hindu caste hierarchy*' (Jeffery & Jeffery, p. 2098).

The pivotal role played by the study of Jeffrey (2000), in terms of understanding the strategies used by the dominant caste to maintain their position, is eventually taken further by the work of Pattenden (2011) on gatekeeping and its impact on social relations in rural parts of Northern Karnataka. Pattenden (2011), in his study, illustrates the growing prominence of gatekeeping (the process of channeling the formal and informal resources between the state and society for private economic and political gain) among the dominant class in terms of the accumulation of wealth and increasing dominance in the village. The gatekeepers, as categorized by Pattenden (2011), fall into three different levels, depending on their position, and the income generated by the position. Level 1 and 2 are mostly income-generating positions, occupied by the dominant class members, with an exception of one or two lower class members- mostly in Level 2 positions. Level 3 is mostly occupied by the lower labor-class members; primarily, the women. In cases where lower-class members occupy Level 2 positions, this is an outcome of a patronage relationship, where the lower class has been serving the Level 1 gatekeeper's family for a long time. In a way, the differentiation itself within the gatekeepers, in terms of the level they occupy, shows the manner in which class hierarchies are reproduced and maintained by the process of financial decentralization in the context. The Level 1 gatekeepers are the dominant class of men, belonging to a large landholding class, and probably the beneficiaries of the Green Revolution, with a large amount of accumulated wealth and political connections in the region. The Level 2 gatekeepers are also a

dominant class of men, with medium-sized land, and minimal accumulation, looking for additional sources of income aside from agriculture. The Level 3s are those who have hardly any source of income apart from the agricultural labor, assuring a minimal increase in their livelihood incomes by joining the levels of gatekeeping.

In a way, economic inequalities spread across time, through state interventions or historically, in terms of landholding size, has eventually lead to further inequalities in terms of gatekeepers. Pattenden (2011) points out that despite the persistence of inequality, no-one challenges it- merely due to hope among the lower level gatekeepers that, one day, they also can earn the same money as, and enjoy status equal to, Level 1 gatekeepers. It can be said that the dominant-class men of Level 1 are able to maintain the unity among the class, and sustain their political power, by scattering out a few benefits in terms of income and influence between the people in the area. Pattenden (2011) thus criticizes the belief that financial decentralization leads to more democratization and changes social relations by empowering the poor and marginalized. Rather, according to him, the financial decentralization has actually increased the domination, exercised by the dominant class in a more covert way over the labor class in the villages. Further, in light of the growing influence of gatekeepers, Pattenden's (2011) concluding comments on the gatekeeping shares a cynicism about the reservation system introduced for the Schedule Caste (SC) /Schedule Tribe (ST) population in the local panchayat. He claims that the study found hardly any positive effects of the reservation in terms of improving the material life, as well as the political life of SC/ST population. However, he points out that "the inclusion of the laboring class gatekeepers on the fringes of the system did (i) underwrite a systematized process of accumulation by the dominant class, (ii) reinforce the dominant class political influence through their role as dispensers of resources and (iii) help to circumscribe the possibility of class-based opposition to dominant class accumulation through gatekeeping."

Pattenden's (2011) criticism about the role of financial decentralization, participation and domination of the dominant class, is agreed with to an extent

by Jayal (2006), who understands the impact of decentralization- in the form of reservation for women in local panchayat on social change- in terms of women's empowerment in rural parts of India. Jayal (2006) identifies the form of exclusion used by the dominant caste to exclude or decrease the role of women members in the administration of the panchayats. These means of exclusion include use of social norms to stigmatize her presence in the public sphere along with the other men; not cooperating with the women members; excluding them from meeting by not communicating the information about the meeting, etc. Jayal (2006) further points out that, in case of lower-caste women members, the means of exclusion used by dominant caste men can take serious forms, such as the employment of coercion, sexual abuse, or even violence / sexual violence, to suppress the active participation of the members. Jayal (2006) seemingly points out that, in places where society is valued more on patriarchal norms and caste discrimination, the decentralization has not led to the empowerment of the women, or, equally, the lower-caste men in villages. However, in places with a long history of the social movement, and that are more liberal regarding women's role in society, the reservation in local panchayat has led to the empowerment of women, and affected the social stratification in the village. In these places, women have been successful in achieving practical interests- for example, in terms of better water facilities for the village, sanitation facilities for the women, children's education, etc.

The contestation between dominant-caste men and women in general, and lower-caste women, is also observed by Agarwal (2001), understanding the issues affecting the participation by women in community forest groups (CFGs) in India and Nepal. Agarwal (2001) explains the different level of women's exclusion in these groups, possible factors responsible for the exclusion, and the effects of the exclusion of women on outcomes of the program. Agarwal (2001) categorizes the participation of women in different manners, such as nominal; passive; consultative; activity-specific participation and active and interactive participation. By analyzing different levels of participation, Agarwal (2001) points out the way in which women are excluded from participating in the CFG. According to Agarwal (2001), the factors responsible for the exclusion of women is the norms and rules of the

organization itself, social norms, perceptions about gender roles, education among the women, etc. It is here that Agarwal (2006) points out that, in the case of social norms, women from the lower castes or even young women from the upper castes face challenges in terms of participation. The case is worse for women belonging to lower caste group who are looked down upon for their active participation with the men in public sphere. The exclusion of women is responsible for making women more dependent on male members of the family, in order to get more information about a certain program. Simultaneously, they are devoid from making any substantial contribution, in terms of knowledge from personal experience, for building a more sustainable program maintaining the ecology of the forest.

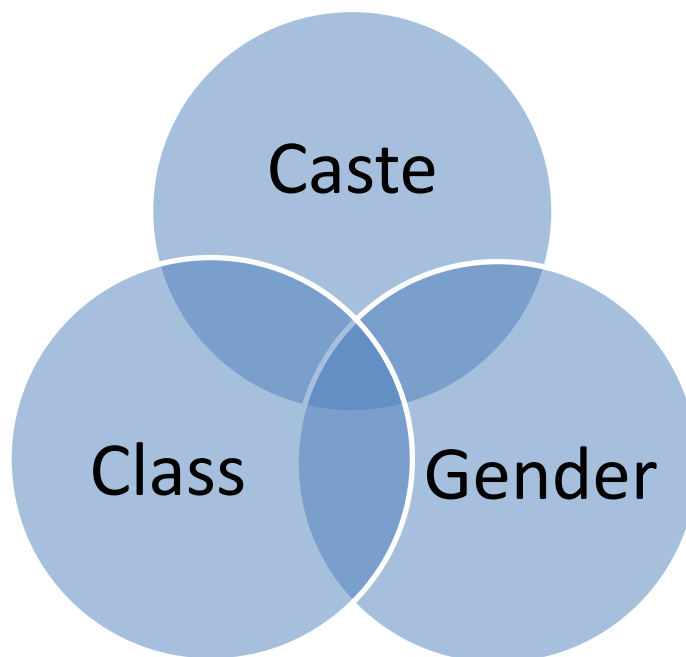
The flight and the complexity of the caste and gender relations, especially for lower caste women in a larger social space, apart from the development interventions, is captured by Karen Kapadia (1995) in her renowned work *Siva and her sisters: gender, caste and class in rural South India*. The work shows the significance of gender relations in terms of understanding the class and caste relations in society. Kapadia (1995) argues that the caste identities formulate one's world view, and untouchables' women are in continuous disagreement with the Brahmanical view of society; and, on one another occasions, try to resist and challenge it. The Kapadia's (1995) work brings out the differentiation between the women belonging to different caste groups. The discrimination experienced by the lower caste women in the informal labour sector are of a much worse nature than the upper-caste women. The lower-caste women face dual oppression, in the forms of gender as well as caste oppression by fellow workers, as well as by the employers, resulting in violence or sexual abuse at work sites.

On other hand, Carswell (2013) argues that the caste identity of lower-caste women does not necessarily become a category of exploitation, but can be a way of empowering them in terms of job opportunities available in growing industrial areas near the villages. Carswell (2013) points out that differential standards adopted by society on the movement of upper-caste and lower-caste women prove to be beneficial for the lower-caste women, in terms of

accessibility to job markets situated outside of the villages. The lower-caste women, unlike upper caste women, do not face a problem in terms of accessing the mode of transportation and adapting to working conditions. Although, as pointed out by Rege (2006), that whilst that is not necessarily the empowered position enjoyed by lower-caste women in comparison to upper-caste women, it has been able to transform the patriarchy inform of male domination within the lower-caste families.

In all, the theoretical framework is informed by the themes of domination, discrimination and resistance to understand the process of formation and functioning of the Water Users Associations.

2.5 Theoretical framework:



Diagrammatic Representation of the theoretical framework

The above figure denotes the theoretical framework adopted in light of the above discussion about domination and exclusion, to develop a holistic understanding of the water reform in Maharashtra. Class stands for me in Marxian sense, representing economic hierarchies in terms of accumulation of

wealth and income earned in relation to other classes in the hierarchy (Wright, 2005). The class relations define the relation of exploitation and domination as antagonistic relationship where it becomes significant for the exploiters to impose harm on the exploited. The element of harm involved in it makes it different from the mere sense of competition. In a way, the Marxist class analysis predicts a 'class conflict' on the part of the exploiters, to wage a war against the exploiters (Wright, 2005). Simultaneously, even in a condition of domination, the consent of the exploiters is gathered through the strategies of developing ideologies by the exploiters that accommodate, at least at a superficial level, the interest of the exploited. However, this does not mean that the exploited are powerless or have no agency other than to give consent to the exploiters. The exploited, even in this condition of ideological imposition, still continue to possess the power to resist and challenge the exploiters by the means of labor power. In the process, the exploited attempt to transform the exploitative relations across the class, and establish egalitarian relations of production and distribution of the surplus in a society. The Marxist class challenge, unlike Weber's is, not limited to transformation of the class relations at local level. The Marxist class struggles are driven by connecting the local /micro-level struggles with the macro-level struggles against the inequalities driven by the market. It is, as Wright (2005) calls it, a moral struggle to establish an egalitarian society.

The intersection of these three identities helps us in understanding the way caste and class identities are mobilized at times to maintain the unity of the dominant caste, whilst simultaneously meeting the increasing challenge or resistance offered by the other caste groups in the villages. It helps us to understand how dominant caste men, especially the rich landlords, used the system of participatory distribution of water to build their economic position, and thereby sustain the political hold among the followers. The use of the intersectional framework will also help us to understand the strategies adopted by certain individuals from the middle-caste groups who, unlike the lower-caste groups, are drawing upon their increasing economic prosperity to negotiate with the dominant caste men in the association. In larger way, it helps to determine factors that constitute domination, but also one's own

power to negotiate with the dominant across the differences of caste, class and gender.

In reference to the above framework, it is important to revisit some of the Marxist debate on class, and its understanding in peasant societies in light of changing economic conditions in the society. As pointed out by Patnaik (1976), the 'class,' as predominately understood in terms of landholding size in light of the capitalist development of agriculture, is unable to provide a complete picture of differentiation existing among the farmers. Although one needs to emphasize that Patnaik, by pointing out the limitation of the concept of landholding size, does not completely negate the significance of the land. Patnaik rather emphasis that landholding size continues to be a significant factor in determining the class position of the farmers in India, especially in areas which lack technological development in agriculture. However, in order to take into consideration the technological development in the agricultural sector and its relation to class, Patnaik put forward the idea of 'exploitation of labor'. The idea of exploitation of labor takes into consideration the amount of agricultural labor employed by the farmers in terms of cultivation of crops. The underlying assumption is that the economic position of the farmers is directly related to their dependence on the labor employed by family members. In other words, the more economically strong the farmer is, the less he or she will be dependent on family members in terms of the labor required for the cultivation of crops. The concept of exploitation of labor tries to differentiate between farmers more on the basis of the income they earn by use of available knowledge in terms of cultivation of crops; availability of a market for particular crops; crops that yield maximum profit etc. Although Patnaik points out that capitalist development in farming can make a capitalist class as an exception to the rule, since capitalist farmers in the presence of high technology may actually employ less labor, but earn more profit.

I believe that Patnaik's gradation of peasants according to the exploitation of labor appropriately addresses the need of the study, and makes the framework more inclusive in terms of the consideration of an agrarian change in these areas of the state. The ability to employ labor sheds light on the economic

capability of an individual, but mentions hardly anything about the role of social capital in addition to this. The inclusive framework of caste and class makes it possible to look into the role of the social capital in terms of the exchange of labor transactions carried out by the poor farmers in the village.

In a way, this intersectional framework takes into consideration the class position of the farmers in terms of the labor employed by the farmers, followed by their caste position, locating the significant social capital in terms of negotiating and maintaining access to water. It is believed that the intersectional framework helps in understanding the experiences of marginalization, as well as domination, in the participatory process of development in a given local context. The framework develops a larger understanding of the process of liberalization and its effects on social and economic transformation in the rural parts of Northern Maharashtra. As Foucault notes, understanding the relationship between power and knowledge will not necessarily result in attaining the truth, but it will shed light on the components of participation as it is perceived and conceived by different participants. As argued by Gallagher (2008), Foucault's understanding of power using the concept of 'govern mentality' provides scope to understand the ambiguity of participation.

Embracing the idea of power as something that is dispersed throughout society can shed light on how power relationships occur, how they are worked out in WUAs, and how power is exercised by dominant farmers. Do questions arise such as: what means are used by dominant farmers to exercise power? Moreover, how are networks among the farmers used by the State to implement the policy of WUAs? How do small farmers exercise their power to provide consensus or resist decisions made by WUAs? Does the power exercise produce different effects than those intended by the policy? By adopting a larger view of power that cumulates both material, as well as symbolic aspects of power, the discussion on participation can be looked at beyond the binary of tyranny and transformation. The process of participation can then be seen as a terrain of both domination and contestation.

Chapter- 3

Water, Caste, Class and Transformations: Understanding Socio-Economic Changes in the Village as a Result of Water Reform

3.1 Introduction

This chapter narrates the story of ‘transformation’ in the village, outlining the significance of water reforms implemented in the village. The chapter examines the way in which different social groups have benefited from the availability of water, and thereby the socio-economic relations in the village. The discussion about the transformation process explores the complex nature of WUAs as part of the socio-political environment of an Indian village, and as part of the wider economic and political environment in India.

The chapter refers to the studies carried out on the relationship between economic interventions made both by the State as well as market-transforming social relationships and caste relationships in Indian villages (Mayer, 1996; Mines & Yazgi; 2010, Mencher, 1974). These studies highlight that despite economic transformations, caste continues to define village life in rural parts of India. Indeed, as argued by Harris (2001), I find that caste and class continue to form the basis of social and capital articulation among affluent groups in village life. I found that the segmentation of knowledge for particular crop productions is arranged along caste-class lines. The process of transfer of knowledge along these lines mostly benefits upper and middle caste-class groups, and excludes lower class and caste groups such as Dalits and others marginalised groups (the ex-untouchables). It has segregated farmers according to caste, in terms of the cultivation of different crops in the area. However, transformation in the agricultural sector has not affected the political structure of the village, and the Maratha continue to dominate village politics. I find, as argued by Jeffrey & Jeffrey (2005), that caste and class relationships constitute one's social as well cultural capital that eventually

reproduce the class relationships, favouring the dominant caste to further its interest in the local context.

This chapter is divided into sections, which will cover: the social and economic composition of the village(3.2); how the availability of water has transformed cropping patterns and social relationships in the village(3.3); the availability of agricultural labour in the village(3.4), and the effects of agricultural change on village life (3.5). This will be followed by a section stating how economic transformation has affected each of the different caste groups in the village (3.6), and then looking at the political landscape of the different social groups in village politics (3.7). Finally, the conclusion will sum up the findings of the chapter (3.8).

3.2 Locating the Village: Understanding the Social and Economic Composition of an Indian Village



Source:http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/india_map.htm

An ethnographic study was conducted of two WUAs in India, namely the Mahabalipur Project in the village of Rampur, and Maharashtra in the Nashik district of India.



Rampur is a medium-sized village located in Lakhanpur Taluka, in the Nashik district of Maharashtra in Northern India, with a population of around 16,000 to 20,000 people. The village is quite large, and connected to other smaller surrounding villages, as well as Nashik city. Rampur is only twenty kilometers away from the Nashik District Headquarters; twelve kilometers away from Lakhanpur (the Taluka Headquarters), and ten kilometers away from the industrial township of Ozar. The village is well-connected to both local headquarters, via regular bus and private taxi.

Socially, the village is composed of different religious and caste groups. In terms of religion, the village mainly comprises families belonging to the Hindu religion, but there are also a few Muslim families, and three or four Jain families. In terms of caste composition, the different groups residing in the village are: Brahman (Priest), Maratha (Warrior), Mali (Gardener), Shimpi (Tailor), Lohar (Ironsmith), Sonar (Goldsmith), Dhangar (Shepherd), Kumbhar (Potter), Navi (Barber), Dhobi (Washerman), Adivasi (Adivasi is the word meaning 'original settlers', which has come to be used by the tribal population to identify themselves), Koli (Fisherman), Chamar (Cobbler), and Mahar and Matang. Among these castes, the Brahman and the Marathas comprise the upper castes in the village. According to the Varna Caste System, Brahmans claim membership of the Priest class, whilst Marathas claim the status of Warrior group. The groups comprising the Mali, Dhanagar, Kumbhar, Navi, and Dhobi, can claim intermediate caste status, and are normally known as Shudras; the Constitution of India officially categories these intermediate castes as 'Other Backward Castes' (OBC).

The lower caste groups comprise the Mahar, Matang and Chamar. According to the Indian Constitution, these people are known as the Scheduled Caste (SC), whilst the Adivasi and Koli are classed as Scheduled Tribes (ST). Of these lower castes, the Mahar and Matang belong to the group formerly known as 'Untouchables'. These former untouchable caste groups are now known as Dalits. The term 'Dalit' is a Marathi term meaning 'ground-down' or 'broken to pieces', and was first used by Dr. Ambedkar in 1928. Ideologically, the term Dalit refers to all marginalised groups in India, including the former

‘untouchables’; women, and the Adivasi groups. Currently, the term Dalit is mainly used to describe the political identity of the lower caste groups. In 1956, the largest community among the untouchable castes in Maharashtra (The Mahar) converted to Buddhism. This happened under the leadership of Dr Ambedkar. Currently, these people mostly define themselves as Buddhist rather than as Mahar, both in the village as well as in the state. However, in the village, these people are also known as people from *Rajwada* (the Palace of the King). Rajwada is the name given to the locality where Dalits live in the village. The name of this place has changed many times. Firstly it was known as Maharwada, followed by Rajawada, and now residents want to rename it Ambedkar Nagar. For convenience, in this study I will use the term Dalit to refer to people belonging to the former ‘untouchable’ caste groups, such as the Mahar and Matang people, and I will refer to the Adivasi as a separate group. This is because the Adivasi form a distinct group in India, and they practice their own unique culture in the Nashik region. Most of the land owned by the Dalits in the village belongs to the Mahar group. The Kamble are the biggest Dalit family in the area, but they originate from the Rampur village. There are only one or two Matang families in the village, and they do not own a significant amount of land.

Table 3.1: Landholding pattern according to caste among the households

Caste of landholders	Number of landholders	Average landholding size (in acres)
Brahmin	2	8.00
Maratha	50	5.76
Mali	32	4.15
Shimpi	2	3.50
Shepherd	14	4.39
ST	9	5.50
SC	11	4.91
Muslim	1	6.00
Jain	1	0.50
Total	122	5.04

Source: Fieldwork

The table above shows a high portion of land belonging to Brahmin, as one of the two Brahmin families possess land totalling more than 10 acres. In the case of the ST communities, it includes two ST farmers who own landholdings

of almost 20 acres each. However, despite the huge land size, it is not cultivated, as it is a hereditary land and there is a dispute among the family members over the distribution of land. The rest of the ST farmers own a very small amount of land and usually conduct sharecropping with Marathas. The SC are in a similar position, with three out of eleven farmers owning land of more than 10 acres, in a range of 8 to 15 acres.

Social hierarchy is a defining feature of village life, and it influences land distribution in the village. Marathas occupy most of the land, followed by a group of Mali farmers, and the remainder of the land is distributed among the other caste groups. However, one difference found in this village- in comparison to many other Indian villages- is the extent of land ownership by lower caste groups, comprising of Dalits (mainly the Kamble family), and some of the Adivasi families. Historically, under the *Watandari System* every village must allot a minimum amount of land to lower caste groups such as Mahar, in recompense for the services they provide to the village. However, in the neighbouring village of Korate, no Mahar families exist to provide services. Therefore, the Mahars of Rampur have always provided services for the Korate villagers and, in return, tracts of land situated nearer to Rampur- rather than to Korate- have, over time, been allocated to the Dalits. This additional land allocation has increased the share of land owned by Dalit families in Rampur. The tracts of land belonging to Dalits are traditionally known as *Hadaki Hadol* (bones and witches) land.

Most of the land in Rampur is owned by the Marathas and other higher caste groups. In terms of the location of the land, it can be seen that every caste community has a separate belt of land, informally named after the name of their trade community. For example, the Malis have land in the belt where there are Mali farmers. In previous eras, a Mali farmer would not own land in the belt belonging to a Maratha family, but now it is possible to find one or two Mali (or other caste farmers) farming in the Maratha belt.

Landholding size continues to be a reason for differentiating the status of families and farmers in the village. In previous eras, the head families of the village belonging to dominant Maratha caste, the Patil and Pawar, owned huge

tracts of land. However, in the last twenty years, farmers belonging to another Maratha family- known as Morey- have emerged as the principal landowners, owning almost one hundred acres of land in the village. In recent years, farmers from nearby villages have also purchased land in the village, mostly from farmers belonging to the Kamble family (i.e., a lower caste group). Now, there are two individual farmers who each own almost 100 to 150 acres of land; then, there is a group of individual farmers, who each own approximately 50 to 100 acres in the village. Additionally, some farmers own smaller holdings, with some holding just a small piece of land of around half an acre. Therefore, in the village, landholding size can be categorised as: 0-2 acres is a small landholding class; 2-6 acres is a medium landholding farmers group, followed by farmers with large landholdings of 6 acres and above. Most of the farmers in the village belong to the medium and small category. However, as evident in the Table 3.1 relating to caste composition, the size of land owned by Mali farmers is relatively small, and most of the Mali farmers fall into the category of small landowners, mostly cultivating flowers and vegetables. Here, one needs to take into consideration that, despite the small amount of land owned by the Mali, they are able to maintain a good income via the cultivation of flowers (such as roses), by selling them to local, as well as national and international markets.

In the last ten years, farmers from Nashik and other nearby villages have bought land in the area. These farmers are popularly called *Nashikar* ('residents of Nashik') by the villagers. The *Nashikars* mainly comprise the Khode family, who belong to the Mali community near Nashik, but there are other communities of Mali in the village, too. This group of farmers originally owned small landholdings of around one-to-two acres near to the Nashik area. During a ten year period, the city expanded, and land prices increased radically. Therefore, the Mali farmers decided to sell their small plots of land, and buy bigger plots of land in Rampur village, and in other villages near to the Mahabalipur Dam. The decision to do this took into account the availability of water in Rampur, as compared to other nearby villages. Most of these Mali farmers purchased their land from Maratha families, and a few shepherd families in the village (Source: fieldwork). The Mali lands are

located in the middle and head regions of the command area of the WUAs. The quality of the land held by most of the Mali farmers is good, by virtue of having black soil in the command area.

Table: 3.2 Soil type in the command area

Soil Type	Percent (%)
Black	88
Red	12

Source: Fieldwork

Also, these migrant farmers mostly live in farmhouses built on their own land. Sometimes, the villagers accuse the *Nashikars* of being responsible for an increase in the price of agricultural land in the area. However, the *Nashikars* are only one group of people who have recently bought land in the village; others have done so as well, but because these families have chosen to reside in nearby villages, they escape direct accusations. The process of new families coming from nearby areas to live in the village continues to this day, but the process of purchasing land in the village by farmers from nearby villages has come to a halt, due to the steep increases in land prices in the region.

In the village, the Marathas could be described as the ‘dominant caste group’. This is not solely on the basis as defined by Srinivas (1955)- that being both in terms of landholding size and the number of people with higher caste status- but also owing to holding key positions in the local institutions, such as the cooperative bank and/or local panchayat. The village has two banks; namely the District Development Bank and the Krishna Cooperative Bank. The key positions in both banks are occupied by members belonging to the Maratha family. However, other groups, including the Mali (Gardener) and Shepherd, could be described as ‘non-dominant’ caste groups- not just because they lack economic strength in terms of landholding and population, but also because they do not hold any key positions in the village.

The Dalits and Adivasi farmers could be described as socially and economically marginalized groups, and they lack the adequate means to further their development. In the following section, I will describe how social

and economic inequalities are reflected in the transformation of agricultural practices and routines in the village.

3.3 Water ‘Transformation’ in the Village: Understanding the Social Composition and Traditions of Indian Agriculture

Image 1: The Mahabalipur Dam during the Monsoon Season



The process of economic development in the village cannot be understood in terms of a linear process of change; rather, different factors have influenced the development of irrigation and agriculture in the village over time—including the introduction of protective irrigation in the 1970s. Prior to the arrival of the irrigation system, most farmers practiced rain-fed agriculture, chiefly cultivating different varieties of millets such as bajra (pearl millet), wheat, jawar, and a few other vegetables. Farmers would cultivate land in the months of monsoon and in the winter season, and leave it as fallow land during the summer season. Only those farmers who owned wells could cultivate crops in the summer season. Baba Patil, a farmer in his eighties, described how when he was young, many farmers would be unemployed during the summer season unless they went out to work on other people's lands, or on road construction. In those days, marriages would take place in the summer months, when people were available to travel from one village to another. Ceremonies were carried out with much pomp and circumstance, and

the relatives of the families would be able to actively participate in ceremonies that continued for days (Interview with Baba Patil, small farmer, Rampur, July 2011). In comparison to the current time, not many farmers cultivated grapes in the pre-irrigation era. Another farmer, named Boraste, who owns a medium-sized farm and specialises in cultivating grapes explained that, when he was young, ‘life was hard for the people’. He relayed that, in the past, he would engage in construction work with other members of his family during the summer. Eventually, he took part in the construction of the dam. He explained that, before water irrigation, there were not many opportunities available for farmers to work during the summer time. However, with the arrival of irrigation in 1980s, things began to change for farmers (Interview with Boraste, medium farmer, Rampur, June 2011). The area now cultivates cash-crops like grapes and flowers with a high rate of return, and vegetables with an average rate of return (for the rate of return of crops refers, to section 3.6).

Table- 3.3: Crop diversification in the command area of WUAs.

Average Number of Crops	
Size Class	Number of Crops
0-2 acres	1.00
2 to 6 acres	1.67
> 6 acres	1.91
Total	1.62

Source: Fieldwork

The above table demonstrates that the small landholding farmers do not attempt a diversification of crops. In relation to Table 3.1 (depicting average sizes of land held by the groups) it can be said that most of the small farmers usually belonging to Mali families cultivate only one crop- roses- which leaves very little land to diversify. The families belonging to SC, and mostly Shepherd- along with few Maratha families, as I observed in the field- diversify more in terms of the cultivation of crops. The crops cultivated by these groups are Kharif crops like tomatoes, followed by wheat in monsoon season and vegetables like grout in the summer (requiring, as it does, a lesser amount of water during cultivation). The next high rate of diversification is observed in the case of large farmers- not out of any survival need, but as a

sign of the existence of a relationship of patronage between the small landholding ST farmers and large landholding Maratha farmers.

Table 3.4 Sharecropping pattern

Number of Farmers under Share Cropping across Size Class		
Size Class	No	Yes
0-2 acres	12 (92%)	1 (8%)
2 to 6 acres	85 (90%)	9 (10%)
> 6 acres	8 (73%)	3 (27%)

Source: Fieldwork

It is usually a practice among the large landholders to devote a major portion of the huge tract of land for the cultivation of grapes, followed by a small section of land (one or two acres) to cultivate wheat and other vegetables, on the basis of sharecropping with ST farmers. By doing this, the large farmers- of which a major section belongs to Maratha caste- avoid the social shame associated with the act of a farmer buying wheat from the open market. Secondly, large Maratha farmers continue to maintain a close relationship with the ST farmers, who eventually become the *Sarpanch* (Village head of the local Panchayat) candidate, as it is a reserved constituency for the tribal population in the area.

The above table 3.4, depicting the diversification of crops, shows the change after the completion of renovation works on the Mahabalipur Dam, which made more water available to the farmers in the region. The increased availability of water motivated local farmers to cultivate different crops, vegetables and fruit. Also, in the 1950s and 1960s in India, agricultural productivity was increased by the introduction of the electric pump-sets for well irrigation, and new seed varieties, fertilizers and pesticides (Harris-White 1996 cited in Carswell, 2012). These changes, and the increasing demand for vegetables such as tomatoes, and cash crops such as grapes, changed cropping patterns in the village. The demand for vegetables such as tomatoes contributed significantly to the development of the livelihoods of farmers. In the 1980s, there was a boom in the production of a variety of tomatoes called *Vaishali*. The *Vaishali* variety takes less time to grow than traditional tomatoes, and the plant produces tomatoes in large quantities. During this

time, farmers earned huge profits from the sale of these tomatoes, and the money received was used to modernise the farms, build wells and bores, develop drip irrigation, buy tractors, and cultivate further crops- such as grapes- in the area. Based on my fieldwork, I observed that farmers try to access as many sources of water as possible. There is a growing trend among the farmers to own more than one bore. This is because the cultivation of grapes requires adequate amounts of water during the summer season. The increasing number of bores is responsible for declining groundwater levels. Some of the cultivators of grapes have also brought water from the nearby villages through pipelines. These pipelines travel a long way of about 10-15 kms from the source to the field. According to the farmers, most of the pipeline owned by the large farmers is almost a half a decade old or more and, now, it is not possible to construct pipelines through the fields of other farmers without sharing it with them. The depleting groundwater levels put pressure on the irrigation system in the village. Most cultivators of grapes want to have access to irrigation, in order to recharge their bores.

This new availability of water, increased capital from the sale of tomatoes, and the availability of low-interest rates from banks encouraged farmers to shift towards the cultivation of grapes (Interview with Arvind Patil, owner of a shop selling pesticides and seeds, Lakhanpur, in July, 2011). The process of transformation in cropping patterns was accelerated after the water reforms. The land reserved for the cultivation of grapes constitutes 36 to 40 % of the total irrigated area in the command area (Annual Report of Project Level Association, 2012-13). The command area of the village has numerous storage tanks, shed-nets cultivating vegetables and polyhouses cultivating flowers. In the command area of both the WUAs I studied, there were around 15 Polyhouses, 20 shednets, and 20 to 30 water storage tanks.

Now, farmers cultivate a variety of crops and vegetables across the different seasons. The village has three main cropping seasons: Kharif (July 1 to October 15) is the monsoon season, and this is characterised by little or no irrigation. Rabi (October 15 to the end of March) is the main irrigation season, and the hot season is from March 15 to the end of June. During Kharif,

farmers cultivate vegetables such as tomatoes, chillies, coriander, spinach, and fenugreek, etc. In the village, however, the season is associated mainly with the cultivation of tomatoes. By the end of July, after one or two heavy showers of rain, the farmers begin to cultivate the tomatoes, and the crop is ready for market within 2 to 3 months. Once the tomatoes are cleared from the field (by the end of October), Rabi season begins. Then, farmers begin to cultivate seasonal crops, such as wheat, jawar (sorghum), bajra (pearl millet), and soya beans, etc. In the altered economic scenario, the cultivation of bajra is associated with the poor status of the individual farmer. From February to March, the crops are removed by harvesting machines which are brought in from North Indian states such as the Punjab and the Haryana. From the end of March till the beginning of July, most of the small farmers are available for other work. Only those farmers who have water left in their wells will cultivate fodder for animals; the rest of the farmers keep their land open from April to June. However, farmers who cultivate grapes are busy throughout the entire year.

The proximity of the village to agricultural markets- such as the Pimplegaon Baswant for tomatoes, and the Nashik and Mumbai market for flowers and vegetables- helps farmers to sell their agricultural produce. The Pimplegaon Baswant Market is one of the oldest and most popular markets in the region. Two other popular markets are the Lasalgaon Market for onions, and the Yeola Market for onions and tomatoes in Niphad Taluka. The Pimplegaon Baswant Market is situated around thirteen kilometres away from the village. The Nashik Market for flowers, vegetables and fruits is twenty five to thirty kilometres away from the village. The Mumbai Market for flowers and vegetables is located at a distance of around 200 kilometres away. Due to the large supply of vegetables produced by Nashik to Mumbai, Nashik is now known as the 'backyard' of Mumbai. Additionally, the development of the residential area of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Company (HAL)- which is situated in Ozar nearby to Rampur- provides a local daily market for farmers to sell vegetables and fruits. Farmers usually sell their grapes to individual traders, who then either export them to international markets, or sell them in the domestic market, mostly to the North Indian states such as

Himachal Pradesh, or Delhi. There is also the Lakhanpur Taluka market yard for selling onions, tomatoes, vegetables, etc.

In the last ten to fifteen years, the Surat city of Gujarat has emerged as a new market for vegetables and dairy products. Most farmers sell their cow and buffalo milk to dairies owned by private companies situated in Surat; these are popularly known as the Surat Dairies. There are two Surat dairies in the village; according to farmers, the Surat dairies offer a high price for milk, and their operations are open and transparent in comparison to the government dairies located in the village. Some farmers also cultivate flowers, such as roses, and they send their produce to Delhi by train for the export market. Aside from these markets, farmers can also sell their agricultural produce at local weekly markets in the village, and in other nearby villages and towns such as Shyampur and Ozar, etc.

3.4 Agricultural Labour in the Village

The agricultural labour market in India has changed over time. There is an emergence of working groups or gangs, consisting of landless labourers, organised by labour contractors. Athreya et al. (1990) explain that this segmentation of the workforce has led to the creation of a large 'elite' force of strong and young workers, who work in gangs throughout most of the year. These young men earn higher wages than older people and children, who are offered less work (cited in Carswell, 2012). These changes in the labour market have been attributed to several factors, such as the development of the industrial sector around villages, the growth of the construction industry and better accessibility to cities and towns via transport, and new job opportunities in cities (ibid). Along similar lines, there has been a change in the labour system in the Rampur village. The old system of sharecropping (popularly known as *batai*) has mostly been replaced by the development of the aforementioned working groups or gangs, consisting of landless labourers, organised by labour contractors. However, the change in cropping patterns is one of the most important reasons for an increase in the demand for agricultural labour in villages.

Table 3.5 Minimum number of agricultural laborers required per acre for different crops:

Crops	Labourers Required	Stage of the Crop	Charges
Tomatoes	2 or 3	Knotting the plant& picking tomatoes	£2-2.5 per person
Flowers			
Open	Family labour		
Polyhouse*	2 or 3	Permanently	£3-3.5
Wheat	Tractor	Plugging	£6-7 (for an hour)
	Harvester	Harvesting	£10-14 (for an hour)
Vegetables			
Spinach	2 or 3/ Family Labour	Sowing and fluking leaves	£2-2.5 per person
Fenugreek			
Coriander		Erect the structure^	£2-2.5 per person
Grout			
Grapes	A group of 2-4 for a complete year of cultivation of the crop	Erect the steel structure, Knotting the plant, Cutting leaves Applying chemicals on plant by hand Removing unwanted leaves Applying chemical solution to grapes Covering the grapes (in case of export quality grapes) Picking the grapes Packing (in case of export quality ones packing is done by the company)	£10-15 per person After this £2-2.5 per person for every stage. It may vary according to the market price and weather conditions.

* Polyhouse requires labour mostly as the temperature in the green house increases rapidly during the daytime especially during the summer.

^For grout usually you a wooden structure suffice the purpose unlike grapes that requires iron / steel structure and aluminum wires. .

Source: Fieldwork

The above table depicts almost all farmers, irrespective of the crops cultivated (except wheat) that require the least labour (the only exception being if one employs labour for removing weed) from the field of all the crops, are dependent on agricultural labour. More labourers are required for the cultivation and harvesting of tomatoes and grapes. For tomatoes, more labour

is required due to the complexity of the cultivation process, and the need to 'catch' an appropriate market price for the crop. Usually, farmers begin the cultivation of tomatoes in the monsoon season after one or two heavy showers of rain. The cultivation process of tomatoes consists of four main stages: plantation, transplantation, knotting the plant to a bamboo, and, finally, picking the tomatoes. In the final stages, the tomatoes are picked, placed in carts and then transported to market. The picking of red tomatoes is undertaken at a frequency of three times a fortnight to avoid the produce touching wet ground. The cultivation of tomatoes requires labour during different stages, but most importantly for setting up bamboos, knotting the plant, and then for picking the tomatoes. The pressure of competing in terms of market price compels farmers to employ labour during all stages of cultivation, or at least for the latter stages of picking, in order to get a good market price. Any delay in the picking of tomatoes affects the quality, and thereby price of the tomatoes. Other vegetables, such as brinjal, peppers, chillies, bitter gourd, bottle gourd, etc., require less labour. Obvious reasons for this are not only differences in the cultivation process, but less fluctuation in the price of these vegetables in comparison to tomatoes. Minimum fluctuation in market price means that farmers can pick vegetables at their convenience, and, therefore, they can employ labour from a pool of family members, rather than outsiders. These other varieties of vegetables assure farmers a fixed income, but they do not generate as much profit as tomatoes do. The tomato is known as the 'magic vegetable' because it can make a farmer rich in a day. The village of Shyampur, near to Rampur, is known for its capacity to take on a huge loan and then refund it purely on the basis of the production of tomatoes.

Intensive labour is also required for the cultivation of grapes, owing to the year-long process of cultivation and the need to obtain an appropriate market price for the crop. The cultivation of grapes can be divided into seven main stages. The names to describe these different stages, as used by farmers and labourers in the area, are: *lagvad* (the cultivation of the plant), cutting (removing of old leaves and branches), pasting (applying a chemical paste to the plant), *zattani* (removing unwanted grapes from the bunches), dipping

(grape bunches are dipped in chemicals), *khudne* (removing the bunches), and, finally, packing the grapes into boxes. The farmers require labour right from the first stage of the plantation, up until the day the grapes are packed and sent out to market. Some farmers employ an agricultural expert known as a ‘Doctor’ who looks after the crops and notes any precautions that should be taken by the farmers to prevent the attack of the disease. Farmers take care of their plants throughout the year, especially during the ripening period between January and March: it is during this time that most disease outbreaks take place. Therefore, a farmer and his family are busy throughout the year looking after their crops. In terms of the market price gained for the produce, there can be a significant fluctuation, so farmers always have to stay alert and keep in touch with their markets in order to receive a good price for their crops.

Other seasonal non-cash crops such as wheat, soybean and jawar, require less agricultural labour. Agricultural operations for these crops mainly include plugging the field, the sowing of seeds, and removing extra grass from the field which may harm the growth of plant. Depending on their economic status, farmers use various machines to manage different operations during cultivation. Most farmers will hire tractors for plugging the land, although poor farmers use bullocks for this task. Farmers also use special harvesting machines, which are brought in from the Punjab and the Haryana.

The demand for labour in order to be able to cultivate these crops, especially for grapes and tomatoes, has been met by the development of several new labour groups in the market, popularly known as the *tolis* in Marathi. These groups work on a contract basis during every stage of cultivation. During the cultivation of grapes, the landowner will provide the group with basic amenities such as a place to live and water to drink throughout the entire period, in addition to their contracted pay. Farmers usually choose these groups from the labour market at the Dindori market yard. Certain groups have formed regular working relationships with the important farmers and landowners, who will phone them directly and employ them at the beginning of the season. Most of these groups are loyal to their big landowners, and they offer certain landowners priority booking rights before making any other

commitment to another farmer in the area. In Rampur, I found labour groups consisting of both local as well as migrant labour.

The daily wage rate can vary from Rs 200 to 250 (approximately £2 – 2.5 a day) in the village. The labour rate for men is around Rs 200, but for women it is between Rs 150 -180 (around £1.50 to £1.80 a day). Labour market rates also vary according to the needs of the farmers and the stages of cultivation of the crops. If farmers are in desperate need of labour in the case of a religious occasion, or bad weather conditions affecting the farm, then they usually pay higher rates than would normally be the case.

I carried out an informal group discussion with grape farmers at the Lakhanpur Market yard in July 2011 and another discussion with a group of farmers in Rampur. The interviewees informed me that the system of employment for agricultural labour has changed gradually over time, and wages have increased in the area. The village used to operate a strict annual salary system called *Sallan* (a Marathi term which means ‘annually’). Under this system, a farm servant known *gadi* in the local Marathi language would be, with his family, a permanent employee of a landowner (known as a ‘*dhani*’ or ‘*malak*’ as termed in local Marathi language). The main features of this system are attributed to the system of *Hali*, which operated in South Gujarat, and are widely discussed by Breman in his work *Beyond Patronage and Exploitation* (1994). In most cases the farm servant belongs to the lower castes, such as Dalits, the Adivasi community, or the Kolis. The farm servant received an annual salary from the landowner in the form of cash, food grain and clothes for him and his family. Responsibility also lay with the employing family of the farm servant in terms of marriages between the daughter of the farm servant and the landowner’s family. In most cases, the landowner belonged to the dominant Maratha caste, who owned large pieces of the land in the village. The farm servant is obliged to work for an entire year on the landowner’s field, but they were free to make extra money during the slack season by offering their services to other farmers in the village.

According to the farmers, the system of employing farm servants gradually underwent changes owing to changes in cropping pattern and an increase in the expenditure on agricultural production. Simultaneously, the introduction of new cropping patterns, such as grapes, made these old employment strategies obsolete, because more intensive labour was required to undertake the very different tasks involved in the production of grapes. It also became more profitable for the farm servant to discontinue the practice of fixed annual employment, and to enter the labour market on a flexible basis, in order to increase his family income from the market. These agricultural and economic conditions meant that it became mutually beneficial to give up the *Sallan* system. Although the system of farm servants exists no more, one can still observe remnants of it in the case of some of the large land size owner farmers in the village. The probable reason for this is the practice by big farmers to keep some of its loyal servants in place.

It can be difficult to pinpoint one single reason why the system of *Gadi* became part of history, and in some parts of the village, its tracks can still be seen. It is evident, for example, when one big landowner offers a small piece of land to a tiller in return for his services, which may include looking after the owner's land and taking care of his cultivated crops. The tiller is free to cultivate any crop on his small piece of land, and the owner does not have any share in the resulting produce. This exchange is sometimes offered by big farmers to servants who have been working for them for a long time. In some cases, the owners will also help the tiller by arranging finance for the marriage of their daughters and sons.

At present, landless labourers follow either one of the two systems, i.e., *batai* (which stands for 'sharecropping') and *todun* ('taking land on lease') as a means of livelihood in the village. The system of sharecropping is called *batai* in the local language. Under the *batai* system, land, water and seed is provided by the landowner, with the tiller only providing labour. What is produced is then shared as 2:1 split between the owner and the tiller respectively, or, in some cases, the produce is shared half-and-half, when the tiller shares the cost of water charges, seeds, and fertilizers with the landowner. The system of

batai is more popular with farmers and with labourers. Under the other system, known as *todun* (this literally means ‘breaking away’), the land is given on lease to the tiller. In this system, the landowner receives an annual rent from the tiller, who is free to produce whichever crops he chooses to cultivate. In this case, irrespective of the losses or gains made by the tiller, the owner gets a fixed amount of rent every year. However, these systems of sharecropping do not necessarily define the relationship between the landowner and the agricultural labour force in the village. Over time, even small farmers have begun to partake in forms of sharecropping and in agricultural labouring, in order to increase their income.

When I had an informal discussion with Baba Pawar an agricultural labourer, in his fifties, he suggested that the system of *batai* was not a fair system for the labourer. He said that, in most cases, the owner cheats the labourer by understating or overstating the costs incurred, and then increasing output whilst taking away more than a due share of the produce. Baba explained that labourers will not challenge the landowner, due to a longstanding relationship of reliance by the labourer on the landowner, and; moreover; the strong economic and social position of the landowner in the village makes it difficult for the labourer to make his case (Interview with Baba Pawar, agricultural labourer, Rampur, in July 2011). This fosters dependence on the landowner by the labourer. In the village, it is the families who hold high status due to tradition who are more likely to participate in the *batai* system or the *todun* system. In the village, the lower caste groups like the Dalits work in these gangs organised locally by the landless labourers. These locally-formed gangs work both in the village itself as well as in the nearby villages. Factors like increases in the demand for agricultural labour and general inflation have contributed to the rise of wage rates in the area.

I found that the huge demand of agricultural labour among the farmers has increased the bargaining power held by labourers in terms of wages, and made these families of agricultural labour more economically independent. A large number of farmers across the region often complain about housing and the rations of food provided to the poor through the Public Distribution System as

being responsible for making the poor lazy, as well as increasing the wage rate.

3.5 The Changing Face of the Village

Changes that have taken place in terms of the availability of water, the increased availability of markets, and changes in cropping pattern have affected the way of life in the village. Traditionally, the village was divided into tracts of land associated with the names of the caste groups residing on those tracts. The original village consisted of 'Wada' (Wada means 'a big house') land situated at the centre of the village; this land belonged to the Patil family (the former village heads, and one of the dominant Maratha families). Houses currently or previously owned by the Maratha families occupy a central place in the village, and the Brahmins reside near the two big temples of village deities. Moving away from the centre of the village, we then find the houses of the Mali families, followed those of the Sonar (Goldsmith), Shimpi (Tailor), and Lohar (Blacksmith) etc. On the outskirts of the village, it is possible to find houses belonging to the Dalit families.

The availability of water and the increasing demand for agricultural labour in Rampur has motivated other farmers and agricultural labour in the nearby area to migrate to Rampur village. Therefore, a new group of 'outsiders' comprise of two groups; people who have recently migrated to Rampur. The first group is made up of agricultural labours from the Adivasi and Konkani people, who used to live in the uphill areas of the district. These people came in search of employment, and, eventually, over a period of time, they settled down- mostly in Vishnagar and Dhanagar, in the village. The second group consists of farmers from the Nashik (as stated earlier, called 'Nashikars') and other farmers from nearby villages, who bought land in the village.

According to villagers, in the past five to six years, land prices have increased by a factor of three to four times the original price of the land. Now, it is beyond the reach of the common working man to be able to buy land in the area. Only businessmen or those who deal in the lucrative black market are able to afford to purchase the land in the area (Informal interaction with a

group of farmers, Rampur village.) Even so, the migration of agricultural labour to the village continues, and there is an increasing demand for labour among the old and new farmers in the village. These migrants comprise mainly tribal groups, but they form a significant section of the village population. Most of the farmers who have migrated to the village and the cultivators of the grapes have moved from near the centre of the village into the fields, and they live in a farmhouse residence. This change has affected the spatial structure of the village. Now, migrant labour can also be found residing near the village centre, whilst the original inhabitants of the village have migrated towards their farms to live.

In the 21st century, the village has better access to medical facilities (most of which are private medical clinics), and the village has expanded significantly in size with the arrival of new settlers, etc. The most remarkable change that has taken place is the widespread dissemination of communication technology and low-priced affordable mobile phones. This has had a profound effect on human interaction and the labour market. Mobile phones have become central in terms of accessing the local labour market both for the agricultural labourer as well as for the farmers. The mobile phones also provide access to information in terms of market prices for the crops, availability of water in the dam, availability of water for the next round of water rotation, availability of subsidies for agro products at the government store houses, etc. Communication technology has especially influenced young people in the village. The mobile phone is used not only as a means to communicate, but as a device that provides access to the internet. Farmers use mobile phones to access weather reports in the area. These services are mainly used by grape cultivators to assess whether precautionary measures need to be taken in order to prevent damage to grape crops. Recently, the government of Maharashtra started to provide a consultation service through the internet to the farmers in the area, and, in order to receive the benefits of the service, the farmers have registered their farm on the relevant departmental website. Now, farmers can access expert advice about insecticide and fertilizer that can be used for proper cultivation of the crops, via the internet. The digital access to information is

fast becoming a necessity for farmers to sustain themselves in the competitive market of grapes.

Apart from mobile phones, the availability of low-price dish antennas has also influenced village life drastically. For the farmer, the television has become a window to the outside world. It is easy to spot a small dish antennae popping out from under a small thatch hut in the areas of Vishnagar and Dahanagar (these are the colonies occupied by the migrant tribal labourers). Usually, after a day at work, the women of the house spend the afternoon watching famous soap operas. There is no doubt that the digital revolution in communications has enabled the villagers to be in closer contact with the rest of India.

Image-2: Farmers celebrating the festival of Pola (worshipping the cattle)



The cultivation of grapes has led to the capitalistic mode of development in the farming sector in the area. The farmers are cultivating grapes no longer depend on traditional modes of agricultural production, in terms of the use of bullocks to cultivate the land. It has considerably affected the cultural life of the village, as seen in the celebration of traditional festivals like *pola*. *Pola* is a traditional festival celebrated by farmers for worshipping the bullocks. In the past, the village leaders used to organize a big rally of bullock carts in the village on the day of *pola*. It used to be one of the most important days in farmers' lives. However, now, the festival has lost its attraction and glamour among the large and middle land size owner-farmers. Now, as I observe, it is

just a few farmers- mostly small farmers- who organize the bullock cart-rally in the village. People no longer attend the bullock cart-rally organized by these small farmers.

3.6 The social and economic consequences of agricultural Transformation

In the following section, I will revisit the story of transformation to describe how it has affected each of the different caste groups in the village. The shift in the cultivation of crops was not uniform, and farmers adapted to change according to their own economic and social positions in the village. As a result, different crops were cultivated by different caste groups, and the cultivation of certain crops is now associated with particular caste groups in the village. In general, as observed during fieldwork, the Marathas mainly cultivate grapes, as well as some wheat and soya beans. The Malis cultivate vegetables and flowers, and the shepherds cultivate vegetables, wheat, and soya beans. The Dalits mainly cultivate wheat, soya beans, etc. This arrangement is not a strict demarcation, but a general trend, with few exceptions, that is easily observable in the village. However, it is the Malis who predominantly cultivate flowers, and it is rare for other farmers, such as those from the Marathas or another caste group, to attempt this.

As noted above, the cultivation of flowers is undertaken almost exclusively by the Mali community, and the reason usually given for this is that only the Malis have the necessary skills and knowledge for the task. Additionally, these caste members cite their propensity towards hard work as one of the reasons why it is more appropriate for them to choose to cultivate flowers. It is not unusual for an entire Mali family to be involved in flower cultivation, including children, who meticulously carry out work such as picking the flowers, storing them in water, and packing them for the market. The family's entire day centres around the growing of flowers. The husband and wife will start their day early in the morning; the husband will go out into the fields and water the plants, whilst the wife will prepare food for the entire family. Once the family has breakfasted, the husband and wife will start picking the flowers. The task of picking the flowers has to be completed by the afternoon, because heat can affect the quality of the produce. If there is an elderly person in the

family, he or she will also help by arranging and storing the picked flowers. Once the flowers are picked, they are kept in a small water tank for storage, and are later arranged into bunches by the husband, wife, and children, before being sent to market in the early evening. There are very few Mali farmers who cultivate grapes and vegetables to increase their agricultural income; the Mali tend to focus solely on cultivating flowers. Therefore, flowers are now associated with the Mali community.

In the village, grapes are generally identified with Maratha farmers, owing to the availability of land and water and, most importantly, the knowledge of the cultivation of grapes being shared exclusively among the members of the Maratha community. Even within the Maratha community, it is interesting to note that the dominant Maratha families do not share information about grape cultivation with each other. For example, the Morey family will not share any information with members of the Patil family or the Pawar family. Dada Patil noted that farmers do not share information about crops with each other because of a sense of jealousy and competition (Interview with Dada Patil, large land size holding farmer, Rampur, in May 2012).

Unlike the Mali farmers, the Dhangar, Shimpri and Dalit families hardly ever cultivate grapes. However, two Dalit families have begun cultivating grapes in the area. Yogesh Kamble has started to cultivate grapes recently- in the last two years- and the Bhaskar Kamble family has been cultivating grapes for five to six years. Despite their Dalit status, the Bhaskar Kamble family is considered to be a moderately wealthy family, with ten acres of land and a tractor for cultivating grapes. Bhaskar told me that the family began cultivating grapes because his father formed good relationships with other caste members in the village, and especially with the members of the Mali caste. His good friend Shankar Phule Guruji belonged to the Mali caste (both Bhaskar's father and Phule Guruji's both are now deceased). Bhaskar's father learned about grape crops under the guidance of Phule Guruji, but Bhaskar made it clear that he did not want to disclose publically Guruji as the person who had taught his family the art of cultivating grapes. Similarly, Yogesh Kamble, who owns five acres with his brother, started off in the grape

business with the help of one of his Mali friends (whose name he did not want to disclose).

Apart from the two aforementioned families, Milind Kamble owns six acres of land, and Sharad Kamble owns twelve acres of land and a tractor. These families cultivate vegetables, such as tomatoes, asparagus, fenugreek, and spinach. Milind Kamble is the wealthier of the two, because he invested money received from the sale of land near HAL gate. He invested the money in the construction of a well which provides his family with enough water to sustain themselves even in the summer months. Sharad Kamble obtained his wealth from his father, who, was a police officer, and the money from his father's pension scheme helped the family to advance. A third person is Siddharth Kamble, whose father was a *Tahasildar* (land officer) who saved enough from his monthly salary to buy a large piece of land of around fifteen acres in the village. Siddharth Kamble and his son currently cultivate wheat and soya beans, but are planning to shift to tomatoes in the near future.

It is important to mark out these Dalit families consisting of the Mahar caste group, because their wealth (in its limited sense) is unique among the larger group of Dalit families. I saw that their land was situated in patches of a green oasis in a vast desert of wasteland, known as the Kamble belt, where other Dalit families also have land. In the Kamble belt, popular crops are green peas, groundnut (in the Kharif season), soya beans and wheat. (In the Rabi season, soya beans and wheat can only be grown if there is a good supply of water provided by the WUAs, or by other neighbouring farmers who have a well.) During the summer, most of the land in the belt remains fallow. A very few shepherd families cultivate grapes, along with the other seasonal crops like wheat and vegetables- which is unusual, because most families belonging to the shepherd community only cultivate wheat and vegetables.

The availability of water in the area affects the different groups of farmers in different ways. As noted earlier, different communities own tracts of land in the village. The Patils own land in the upper belt, which is closest to the irrigation canal. The next belt of land is owned by the Pawar family, and then, across the Lakhapur Road, a belt of land is owned by Mali farmers and

shepherd farmers. Finally, the last belt of land is owned by Dalit farmers. Prior to the formation of the WUAs, Mali farmers would complain that the Patil farmers in the upper belt dominated the water distribution process. The Patil farmers would not allow regular water access to any other farmer from the Mali or Shepherd belt. The Mali and other middle-caste groups found it difficult to challenge the domination of these farmers, and so the Malis needed to make continuous requests to Patil farmers to allow water to pass through their farms.

The Dalits found it particularly difficult to gain access to water, mainly because their land is situated away from the main canal. Also, the dominant Maratha families hardly ever allowed water to pass to the Dalit farms. In these conditions, the Dalit farmers decided to depend on rainwater for the cultivation of their crops. At the same time, economic gains made by changes to cropping patterns encouraged some farmers to construct wells and bore wells, to facilitate the easy availability of water. However, the increased proportion of bore wells has gradually decreased groundwater levels in the area. This decrease in groundwater levels is now becoming an urgent reason to consider the reform of water irrigation systems in the area.

Therefore, prior to the set-up of the WUAs, caste and economic status affected the segmentation of knowledge about and availability of water in the village. This system began to reflect issues of caste and wealth, rather than the ability of individual farmers in the area. The Malis have partly been successful due to their ability to control and disseminate knowledge in the community; the Maratha farmers are always praising the unity of Mali farmers in the community. Within the Maratha communities, it would appear that rivalry among families prohibits them from sharing knowledge and co-operating with other dominant Maratha families. However, in terms of the consolidation of caste interests, the Maratha families, as the dominant community, find ways to continue to support each other in terms of knowledge, financial support, and the sanctioning of different schemes, etc. Gangurde, a Dalit in his forties who engages in transportation work in the village, says that “The Marathas treat their members as one family and as one community, unlike the other lower

caste groups who consistently fight among themselves. (Interview with Anil Gangurde, a truck driver in Rampur, March 2012).

This brings us to a discussion on the role of social capital existing among the affluent groups in the village. The social capital available to Marathas is used to support each other in times of crisis in order to preserve the status of the caste. For example, group members will use their relationships to sanction schemes such as the building of wells, or the gaining of compensation for damaged crops. During the period of my fieldwork, farmers received compensation for damaged crops due to unseasonal rain in 2011- especially for crops like soya beans. Members of dominant families who also worked at WUAs found it easier to access compensation, owing to their good relationship with Nandu Dada, the leader of the village and a member of the Patil family. In general, other caste groups, such as the shepherd and shimpi, and the marginalised groups of Dalits and Kolis, often complain about the biased distribution of benefits emanating from the government towards members of the dominant families. But this does not mean that rivalry does not exist among members of the dominant Maratha families. During my informal interview with Dyaneshwar Jadhav (who belongs to the Koli caste), he spoke about how farmers complained that the Patil family did not provide them with enough funds to build their houses under government schemes. Despite rivalry and conflict among the Maratha families, they still strive to sustain their supremacy in the village by means of economic strength and power in the community (interview with Dyaneshwar Jadhav, small farmer, Rampur, June 2012).

Harris (2001) notes how the notion of social capital is not a neutral concept devoid of larger social and economic reality. The idea of social capital is rooted in the social and economic realities of a society. Owing to their already high position in society (in terms of land ownership, wealth and caste), the Marathas were able to use influential networking to reap the benefits of agricultural transformation. By contrast, the poor and socially marginalised groups in the lower caste groups, such as Dalits, were unable to build the necessary networks needed to claim the benefits of agricultural transformation.

It became evident that, by using networks, the upper caste groups were able to corner the benefits of the agricultural transformation, and thereby maintain their dominant positions in the society. In a way, the agricultural transformation has only served to continue the same scheme of caste benefits that already existed; dominant caste groups, such as the Marathas, seized the opportunity to increase their income through grape cultivation, and the Mali and Shepherds raised their income by monopolising the cultivation of flowers and vegetables. The Dalits, with a few exceptions, were not able to grab the benefits of the transformation, because owing to their lack of knowledge, networks, and capital they were not able to pursue a new cropping pattern.

3.7 Village Politics

The two dominant Maratha families of Patil and Pawar make up the traditional political power base in the village, and they have taken on the role of village managers and administrators. Both are powerful families and rivals. The Patil family is proud of their heritage of service to the Shivaji Maharaj, a monarch who ruled southern Maharashtra in the 17th century. Maratha have made the King an icon of the community.

Image 3: Celebration of Independence Day at Panchayat Village Office - Attended by the Dominant Leaders of the Village



The Patil family own a big house in the centre of the village called the Wada. The Wada symbolises the glorious past of the family, and today the house stands out as a testimony of the enormous power held by the family in the village. However, the Wada has now been abandoned by the family in terms of use as a family home, and the Patil's family, like many other farmers, has recently moved to premises nearby their farms, just outside of the village.

In general, official village politics are dominated by two political parties: namely, the Rashtrawadi Congress Party (The National Congress Party, NCP) and Shiv Sena (SS), with the support of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). (Both Shiv Sena and BJP are right-wing political parties in India.) NCP is a faction of the Indian National Congress Party; a national party. The NCP was formed on 25th May 1999, under the leadership of Sharad Pawar, P.A Sangam and Tariq Anwar. During the fieldwork period, NCP was in an alliance with the Indian National Congress Party, and forms the government in Maharashtra state, based in the centre. Among the dominant Maratha families in the village, the Patil supports the NCP, and the Pawar family supports the Shiv Sena. Additionally, for a long period of time, the Patil family have dominated the village politically as well as socially. One reason for this is because the family are substantial landowners in the village. The head of the family is Bajirao, who is a well-respected man in the village. He has an upstanding reputation there, and leads the National Congress Party, which is a dominant party in the village. His main political candidate for the last three terms has been *Sarpanch* (this is the lowest division in administrative ranks in India), who is the head of Gram Panchayat village.

Bajirao is on the board of Directors of the Kadwa Co-operative Sugar Factory, and the success of orchestrating Water Users Associations (WUAs) in the area is often attributed to him. He works with activists of the local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), which is known as the *Samajik Vikas Kendra* (SVK) (The Centre for Social Development). He actively participated in the process of implementation of WUAs policy in the area. He was assisted by Balaji Mawale, a vice president of the SVK, who has been active in the implementation of WUA policy in the area, as well as in other parts of

Maharashtra. Also, for two consecutive years up to 2005 (since its formation of PLA in 2003), Bajirao has been president of the Project Level Association (PLA), which consists of twenty-four WUAs in the area. He still continues to hold influence over the association, and is an important person in its ranks. However, at the last Panchayat election in 2011, Bajirao and his party lost out to the opponent, Yashwantrao Pawar, who represents the Shiv Sena Party. The village now has two leaders: Bajirao, who is a member of the Patil family, and Yashwantrao, who is a member of the Pawar family.

Yashwantrao is a member of the dominant Maratha family in the village. This family are also large landowners in the village. The family head is Sainath Bhau, the father of Yashwantrao Pawar, who is also a respected man in the village. He is thought of as the leader of the *Shetkari Kamgar Paksha* (the Peasants and Workers Party), which is a Communist party formed in India in 1947. He has contributed significantly to the development of the village, and it is said that he personally oversaw the construction of the Canal of the Mahabalipur Dam to ensure that villagers benefitted from the dam. Sainath Bhau is also known as being responsible for the construction of a secondary school in the village. It is said that in order to raise funds, he travelled to Mumbai and across the State to collect money from those people who had migrated to other areas. He has often asked people across caste lines to donate money to the school in the name of the village. Sainath Bhau also used to be an active member, and president of, the *Maratha Vidya Prasarak Samaj* (Maratha Education Spreading Society) in the area. As an active politician in the village, he continues to enjoy a long-standing dominant position in the village. However, in recent years, he has gradually withdrawn from politics and his son, Yashwantrao Pawar has become more active in village politics.

Yashwantrao Pawar strives to continue his father's legacy. His party won the panchayat (village council) elections in 2011, and he is now the real head of the panchayat. (Rampur is a constituency reserved for the Adivasi community. So the practice among the dominant family members is to appoint a member of the Adivasi community as merely an 'official' head of the village panchayat. However, the real powers are exercised by a member of the

dominant family. In the last ten years, it was Bajirao from the Patil family, and now it is Yashwantrao Pawar.) Yashwantrao Pawar also won the Zilla Parishad (ZP) elections in 2012, and he is now head of the Rampur division of an organised group of villages including Rampur, Akrale, Shyampur, Ganeshgao, and Korate. After winning the ZP elections, he has enhanced his political influence in the area. He now holds two strong positions in the area, and is emerging as a strong leader. He is also the chairman of the Saptsrungi WUA in the village. The rise of Yashwantrao Pawar has brought glory back to the Pawar family. The Patil family have taken their defeat seriously, and are now making attempts to mobilize the people under their banner by organising different festivals. In the past, the villagers used to organise festivals together, but now every public festival is organised separately by the two prominent families. Both the families are making efforts to gather support from other communities, especially lower-caste communities in the village.

Yashwantrao Pawar enjoys strong support from the Brahman community in the village, and there is an obvious reason they support him: because of the political legacy of the Pawar family, which seems that upper-caste alliances must be formed to safeguard their own interests, and because the Brahmans in the village are supporters of the Bhartiya Janta Party. Dileep Joshi stated that most of the members of the Brahman community had been earlier active members of the Shetakari Kamgar Pakash (the Party of Farmers and Workers) under the leadership of Sainath Bhau. Eventually, as the Party lost its political hold, members belonging to the Brahman community shifted allegiance to other parties such as the BJP and Shiv Sena (Interview with Dileep Joshi, small farmer, Rampur, in May 2012. Raju Joshi (as he is popularly called) is a member of the Brahman community, and he is an active member of BJP in the village.

BJP and Shiv Sena formed an alliance for the elections, and Raju Joshi actively supported the Yashwantrao Pawar candidate of Shiv Sena in the Zilla Parishad elections in 2013. Also, he actively organised rallies in support of the Yashwantrao Pawar, both during and after winning elections, and celebrating the victory of the alliance in the ZP election. The alliance can also be seen as

being between the two upper-caste communities, and this serves to safeguard their status and interests in the village. Also, because Yashwantrao represents a right-wing conservative party, it is easy for the Brahmans (most of whom are also members of BJP, which is another right-wing party) to identify themselves with his leadership and the ideology. In a way, the alliance safeguards the political interests of the two upper-caste communities in the village.

The other political party which has a presence among the agricultural labourers and Adivasi population is the Communist Party of India (CPI (M) popularly known as the 'Hammer and Sickle Party' (the hammer, sickle and star are symbols of the Marxist Communist Party of India). The party representative in the village, Vikram Kulkarni, seems to hold a strong position among the agricultural labours in the village. The Party claims to have a membership of two to three thousand men in the village. However, Vikram Joshi belongs to the Brahman community, which forms a numerical minority in the village. Unlike most of the members of the Brahman community, who are supporters of BJP, Vikram continues to be an active member of the CPI(M). His father is a retired army officer, who owns around five to eight acres in the village. However, because political parties such as the NCP and SS are led by dominant Maratha families, this leaves very little space for the Communist party to participate actively in village politics.

The dominant Maratha families do their best to ensure there is little opposition to their leadership in the village. In the ZP elections of 2012, the Communist Party did not field a representative for the elections. This was despite a claim that it enjoyed substantial support among the large Adivasi population and agricultural labourers in the village. The party representative, Vikram Kulkarni, did not provide any suitable explanation for the inability of his party to fill in a nomination form. This episode resulted in dissatisfaction among party members, who were unable to understand why the party did not field a candidate in the election. One party member I spoke to accused Vikram of being scared of Yashwantrao, and suggested that this was why he did not field

a candidate. Similar dissatisfaction was also voiced by Jadahav Baba, a tribal farmer who supports CPI (M).

Therefore, it can be seen that it is the Marathas who dominate village politics. Two reasons, as suggested by Lele (1990) and Baviskar (1994), may explain why the Maratha dominate the politics of the Maharashtra region. Firstly: strength in numbers, because the Marathas comprise 30% to 35% of the total population of the State. Secondly, the economic strength of the Marathas, in terms of land ownership and the benefits gained from ceasing the leadership of rural development incentives. According to Baviskar (1994), one of the most important factors that contributed to strengthening the Maratha community was the rise of sugar co-operatives in the 1960s. This led to significant economic gain for individual Maratha leaders, and this, in turn, helped to strengthen the power and status of the entire community.

These reasons are relevant to my argument about the continued domination of the Marathas in village politics. Although in the Nashik region the Marathas have moved away from the cultivation of sugarcane, the cultivation of grapes has contributed immensely to the economic wellbeing of the Maratha community in the region. Marathas also enjoy the historical legacy of having been the heads of villages and helping to administer leadership in the state. However, the Marathas continue to withhold land, especially the dominant families of Bajirao and Yashwantrao. Additionally, they control the adequate supply of water. The Marathas continue to maintain a strong representation in the institutions that are vital for rural development, such as the panchayat, the co-operative sugar factories, the co-operative banks and the Water Users Associations, etc. Therefore, they have access to different opportunities and resources that are unavailable to others, and these opportunities nurture the economic development of farmers belonging to that Maratha community. This local network among families and caste members further extends to state-level politics. It is this complex network of family and kinship relations at local and state level that not only sustains the power of their community, but negates the growth of any strong opposition to the domination of the Maratha group in the village. As pointed out by Jeffery (2001), caste as a religiously sanctioned

system of resource transfer is in decline; caste organization and identity are important forms of social or symbolic capital for rural elites. The dominant caste continues to exercise its influence, as seen in the case of the Jats of Uttar Pradesh, through the networks developed at the local level among the local administrative unit's local police, Panchayats, etc.

During my fieldwork, I found that the people, in general, felt it was necessary to be able to elect a candidate who was capable of using this network to accomplish the development goals of the area. The strong point of the Maratha candidates lies not only in the enjoyment of the support of the people, but also in the fact that the Marathas can convince people they have strong networks and connections to carry out development work in the area. All candidates need to have these connections to accomplish certain tasks.

One other strength of the Marathas is the role played by family structure in their communities. The dominant families of Yashwantrao Pawar, Bajirao and Suresh Morey continue to live in joint families. This is more evident in the case of the Morey family, where twenty members all live together in one house. This structure makes it easier to establish family networks, and it is easier for Marathas to practice the efficient division of labour among family members. The other reason is to avoid the division of large estates of land. For example, one family member will take responsibility for the farms, whilst others will engage in public life, such as in village politics. This arrangement ensures that the family continues to gain income from farming, whilst being able to maintain its position in village politics. By maintaining the family's high position in the village, the family is also able to gain privileged access to different government schemes that are carried out for the benefit of farmers.

Other communities, such as the Mali and Shepherd, do not enjoy traditional support in the form of caste legitimacy in the village, and these communities lack the strength in numbers required to challenge the hegemony of the Marathas in the village. Also, the Mali community lacks the necessary economic support needed to contest elections. Most of these families only own small pieces of land, and the entire family works on it. These conditions do not offer the time or economic resources needed to be able to engage actively in

village politics. Some Mali farmers, who are well off in terms of income, lack the enthusiasm to challenge the hegemony of the Marathas in the village, and they prefer to be passive in village politics or to side with the candidates who will fulfil their demands. However, unlike the Mali in Rampur, I found that the Malis in Shyampur were stronger and more politically vocal in their demands and their engagement with issues. In Shyampur, a strong Mali leader exists in the form of Sathe, who used to participate regularly in the village politics and is an active member of the Mali and the OBC Community Group, formed under the leadership of the strong Mali leader Chaggan Bhujbal, belonging to NCP party.

In general, in Rampur, competition for village leadership is between the two dominant Maratha families in the village, and other communities such as the Mali and Dhangar do not contest for the leadership, even though they are economically better-off than many other lower castes in the village. As stated by the President of the Mali community, Mr Ramraja Phule, where there is no strong opposition leadership or adequate resources to challenge, the Mali prefer just to be a pressure group in the village (Interview with Ramraja Phule, small farmer, Rampur, in June 2012). It can be seen that the Mali tend to vote for whoever favours their own agenda. The other impression that I got from talking to Ramraja was that the Maratha domination can be challenged if the lower-caste groups, such as shepherd, Mali, and Adivasi, form an alliance among themselves. He obviously excluded Dalits from this group alliance. I find that, in general, Mali, Shepherd and Maratha farmers associate themselves with each other and converse with and make jokes about each other. However, when it comes to Dalit farmers, this does not seem to be the case. I find that Dalit farmers mostly have a separate place to sit in the village market yard during evening hours, away from the only tea stall near the shop of cobbler, mostly interacting amongst themselves. Sometimes, some of the old Maratha farmers join them for fun, but I never observed any young Maratha farmers interacting with them. In a way, people somehow continue to distance themselves from Dalits in public life, and, as noted in Ramraja's statement, even in political life.

However, among the lower-caste communities such as the Dalits, people seemed to be more politically aware of their rights to field candidates in elections. However, although the lower castes have strength in numbers in the village, they lack the economic resources and caste legitimacy to contest for a post in village politics.

In the village, it is believed that only the Dalit vote is up for grabs in the election market. Unlike the other castes and dominant families, who always vote in a certain way, the Dalits are floating voters, and do not demonstrate any particular caste loyalty in the village. Therefore, the Dalit votes influence the village Panchayat elections, and their demands are seriously considered by the contesting candidates in the village. The complex caste and family relationships apparent in the village gives the Dalits, in a sense, the power to determine the political fate of the candidates contesting the local elections in the village.

In summary: caste legitimacy, tradition, and economic prosperity play a vital role in making the Marathas the dominant power in the village. Even in an era of democracy and multiple-party politics, old caste structures, relationships and hierarchies are sustained and nurtured. This means that the Marathas enjoy almost absolute power which goes unchallenged by other communities in the village.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how the availability of water affects village life. The findings of my study confirm the findings of other similar studies, which show that caste differences in terms of the ritualistic are gradually decreasing among the different caste groups. Meanwhile, social and economic differences are increasing among the different caste groups. However, my study also found that caste still plays an important part in village life and politics, and that caste has been re-invented as a form of social capital that sustains and articulates the economic interests of the affluent caste groups in the village. This was evident when I examined changes in cropping patterns; the Marathas dominated grape production, and the Malis dominated flower cultivation. These groups incline

only to share knowledge about their crops among their members, and they work together to help each other based on caste membership. However, this segmentation of knowledge about different crops negatively affects the lower caste communities, such as the Dalits, who were excluded from certain knowledge-sharing about crops and techniques for agricultural production. I found that in some cases, there was an exchange of knowledge among the farmers belonging to different caste groups- but this was minimal, and was sustained only where friendly personal relations existed between the various caste members.

The political structure of the village remained largely intact despite many continuous processes of economic transformation. Traditional caste groups, such as the Marathas, continue to wield power and dominance in village politics. The reason for this continuous domination by the Marathas is not just down to numerical strength, but the ownership of land and the economic gains this community have made as a result of the process of 'transformation', in terms of strengthening their monopoly on the cultivation of the grapes. The dominance exercised by the Marathas operates via membership of the village Panchayat, local co-operative banks, and development groups, etc.

The chapter has outlined the wider scope of change and development in Maharashtra, and has illustrated how economic 'transformation' has not equally benefitted all the caste groups in the village. The process of transformation continues to exclude the poor and the marginalised from the benefits of development. The following empirical chapters will show how these socio-economic differences operate in the two WUAs, and how these differences affect the distribution of water by Water Users Associations (WUAs).

Chapter-4

The State, Civil Society and WUAs: Understanding the role of State and Civil Society on Water Users' Associations (WUAs)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I argue that, unlike the neoliberal agenda of decentralization through increasing participation, the introduction of WUAs has increased the possibility of state intervention in the irrigation sector, thereby transforming the state-society relations in the irrigation sector. Active and strong state intervention can be clearly observed at different stages during the implementation of the policy of participatory irrigation management. As noted by Foucault, the neo-liberal agenda is not about the state playing a minimal role in policy and its implementation, but about playing a continuous role in engagement with the market (Read, 2009). This is apparent when the nature of state intervention in WUAs in the irrigation sector is examined; state engagement takes the form of the organisation of the legal system for WUAs, the use of state of the art technology use, and providing administrative, legal, educational, and technical infrastructure assistance to those who run the WUAs, and farmers, in order to form and maintain WUAs. As part of this process, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are financially dependent on the state, and this means that, often, they work with the state to implement policy rather than to drive policy change as agents of transformation.

In this chapter I will refer to academic literature and previous studies that have sought to understand critically the nature of state intervention and the role of NGOs in the phases of neo-liberal development (Baviskar ,2004, Dagnino, 2007; Thomas, 2007, Mosse, 2005; Gooptu, 2013, Kamat, 2002). Further evidence I have obtained originates from official documents and reports issued by the Government of Maharashtra; and informal interviews carried out with bureaucrats in the irrigation department; members of local NGOs; staff at the WUAs, and farmers in the village.

This chapter is divided into sections, which will cover: the details of the norms and regulations followed and implemented by the Maharashtra Management of Irrigation Systems by Farmers Act 2005 (MMISF Act-2005) (4.2), the role of bureaucracy and the way it acts in practice, in terms of the functioning of WUAs (4.3). This will be followed by a discussion on the role of NGOs, their structure and functions, and the way they influence the functioning of the WUAs (4.5), and then the process of formation of a nexus between bureaucracies, the NGOs, and local elite farmers influencing the WUAs (4.6). Finally, in the conclusion, I will critically discuss the role of the state and NGOs in the process of the implementation of WUA policy (4.7).

4.2 The Official Policy of WUAs: Maharashtra Management of Irrigation Systems by Farmers (MMISF) Act 2005 (Norms and Regulations)

As stated earlier in the theory chapter (Chapter 2), the growing concern about the scarcity of water emphasizes the need to introduce participatory mechanisms for improving the efficiency and equitable distribution of water (FAO, 1984, Biswas 2004). This new approach has compelled policy makers to consider the knowledge and needs of a wider group of people in the process of policy formulation. Reforms in the irrigation sector in India are the offshoot of gradual thinking that developed over a long period of time. Although, in the case of Andhra Pradesh, irrigation reforms were implemented using a top-down approach, and the state eventually played a large role in the implementation of the reforms. In the case of Maharashtra, reforms were gradually developed using different policies and commissions enacted by the state over a period of time, and these reforms were administered using a bottom-up approach (Narayanmoorthy & Deshpande, 2005).

The policy of the WUAs was passed in the 1990s, and later renewed in the form of an act termed as the MMISF Act of 2005. When we look at the history of the MMISF Act-2005, it can be seen that the act is not something new that provided fresh insights into transforming the management of irrigation water for farmers. In fact, the act replicates guidelines issued by the Co-operative Act in 1994 for the registration and management of WUAs by the state. The

MMISF Act (2005) lays down the process of registration for WUAs, its administrative organisation in the command areas, and its day-to-day activities. However, unlike in the Co-operative Act (1994), where the formation of WUAs was conditional depending on the majority participation of farmers in the command areas (e.g. around 51 per cent of the total farmers in a command area), the MMISF Act-2005 makes it mandatory for irrigation beneficiaries to form WUAs in their command areas. Another important feature of the MMISF Act-2005 is the repetition of the policy of the Co-operative Act that relates to no restrictions being placed on the crops cultivated by farmers by the government, empowering the farmers and giving justice to tail-end farmers in the command areas (Sodal, 2007).

The salient features of MMISF are as follows (for details, refer to Appendix Seven):

- 1) Water will be supplied only to WUAs.
- 2) Water supply to a WUA will be on a volumetric basis.
- 3) WUAs will have the freedom to implement their own cropping patterns.
- 4) Tail-enders will be assured a supply of water.
- 5) Women's representation is obligatory in the WUAs. (Sodal, 2007)

The MMISF Act 2005 details the roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved in the process of implementation and functioning of the WUAs. These roles and responsibilities are outlined in Appendix [I] to this thesis. The MMISF Act 2005 proposes a three-tier system of operative administration, consisting of the Project Level Association (PLA), followed by the Distribution Level Association (DLA), and, finally, the Water Users Associations (WUAs). The WUA is the grassroots organisation that carries out the function of the distribution of water and the collection of water charges from the farmers.

The Act broadly classifies three major goals (Bhogle, et al. 2007; MMISF Act-2005, Government of Maharashtra, 2005), as follows:

4.2.1 The Equitable Distribution of Water

According to Bhogle (2007), the policy emphasizes the need to promote and secure the equitable distribution of water amongst its members. The users are required to maintain adequately the irrigation systems, and to ensure efficient, economical and equitable distribution and utilization of water to optimize agricultural production. The policy considers that farmers at the tail end of the command area do not get an allotted amount of water, creating a barrier in establishing trust through an assured supply of water among the tail-ended beneficiaries. In order to overcome the limitation of the existing system of water distribution, the policy reforms the process by giving priority to the farmers in the tail-end areas, followed by the farmers located in the middle and then the head region in the command area. As the water supply shifts upstream and outlets are closed down along the way, it suggests that farmers should co-operate with each other to facilitate the distribution of water, and to allow WUAs to carry out the equitable distribution of water among the farmers. This policy was considered significant in light of contemporary studies carried out about water distribution and agricultural change.

Attwood (1993) notes, in his important study on irrigation around the Nira Irrigation Canal in Maharashtra, that water distribution was closely related to agrarian changes in terms of the expansion of irrigated sugar cane cultivation in Maharashtra, at the beginning of the 20th century. His study shows the way the mode of water distribution in large-scale irrigation systems, such as the Nira Left Bank Canal in the Bombay Deccan region (now known as Mumbai), triggered the capitalist development of the sugar cane sector; first, by the cultivation of the crop, and later, by means of its agro-industrial processing. Attwood links a particular organisational form of water distribution, which was formerly introduced by the colonial state- known as a 'block system', to particular patterns of capitalist agrarian change.

In a way, a concern for farmers' participation, and an increase in the productivity of the crops, guided the move towards the policy of the equitable distribution of water.

4.2.2 The Participation and Empowerment of Small Land Owning Farmers

Empowerment through participation is another important agenda envisaged by the PIM policy (Bhogle, 2007). The agenda of participation considers that, if the distribution of water below outlet level is managed by *'the farmers' organisations, and if the maintenance of the minors and field channels is carried out by the farmers, then Government machinery will be relieved of the considerable burden of such work. The government then can pay more attention to the proper maintenance and operation of main canals and the storage system'*. (Bhogle, et al. 2007, p.42) This will then lead to a reduction in terms of the cost of maintenance of the canal, and improve the processes of distribution and allocation of water. In order to achieve this aim, the government felt that it was important to educate the farmers about the management of water.

However, the idea of co-operation among the farmers, and farmers managing their own irrigation system, is not new: it is something that has been practiced for many years. For example, the ancient system of water management includes the Malgajari Tank in the Chandrapur District, and the Phad system in the Nashik district in Maharashtra. These systems were managed by the farmers. In fact, it can be demonstrably shown that India has a long history of farmer-managed irrigation systems, from the Kuhls of Himachal, to the tanks of South India (Agarwal & Narain, 1997).

The MMISF Act's policy requires farmers in a command area to form a WUA comprising a managing committee and staff, drawn from local farmers in the area. The management committee of the WUA is given the authority to fix a required amount of water charges, taking into consideration the cost incurred by the Association in terms of the maintenance of the office and canal system. The farmers are provided water rights in terms of putting forward their

demands for the required allotted amount of water for irrigation at any time, which will be considered based on the available stock of water in the dam. The farmers should form a joint inspection committee, consisting of officials from the Irrigation Department and members of the WUA, to monitor renovation work of the canal before transferring the responsibility of the management of the canal to the farmers. The objective is to empower farmers, and to increase accountability on the part of the Irrigation Department.

The policy of PIM empowers the management committee of the WUA to resolve disputes arising among the farmers over the issue of water distribution in the area. Unlike in the past, the managing committee of a WUA can now legally carry out actions against farmers who interrupt the process of water distribution in the command area. However, in general, it is believed that these conflicts can be resolved by the management committee, by enforcing the farmers to obey the rules of the WUA, or by using social pressure to encourage farmers to follow the norms of the water distribution process in the command area. The policy considers that educating farmers about the management of water is necessary. As noted in a study carried out by the research wing of the Irrigation Department, “Water is basic for human survival, but the resource is a limited one. In order to inculcate good habits in the new generation, a timely education to the youth is very necessary. An initiative is taken to design curriculum for water and its important aspects for primary to higher school.” (Bhogle, et al. 2007, p. 52) The involvement of NGOs is designed to facilitate the participation of farmers in irrigation management. Participation of NGOs is encouraged, in order to raise the awareness of the ‘common people’ in water management. It is anticipated that a good atmosphere will be created at a state level, as well as at field level, by working together with the NGO in order to make reforms fruitful (Bhogle, et al 2007).

4.2.3 Financial Recovery of the Irrigation System

The cost-benefit analysis forms another core agenda of the policy of PIM (Vaidyanathan, 1999). In fact, one observes that cost-benefit analysis was also a guiding principle for irrigation reforms during colonial times. The different

commissions constituted during colonial times, such as those instituted by M. V. Visvesvaraya (1934), suggested implementing water charges on a volumetric basis, and asking farmers to form groups in order to collect these water charges (Lele and Patil, 1994). According to the MMISF Act-2005, it is necessary for the system to be self-sustainable; the water rates for both irrigation and non-irrigation should be such that annual water charges accrued should meet the yearly Ordinance & Maintenance expenditure fully. To achieve the objective, water rates were increased in 2001 to 2 to 2.5 fold those of earlier charges. According to Purandare (2012), the increase in water charges were imposed taking into consideration the opinion of the WUAs across the state. Accordingly, the enhancement in water rates was successfully implemented from September 2001-onward with the built-in provision of a 15% increase in water rates every year. The water rates for non-irrigation use are increased again in 2006.

The other important aspect of the policy is to recover the financial losses incurred by the cost of the construction and maintenance of the irrigation system. It is envisaged that transferring the responsibility of collecting water charges, the distribution of water, and the maintenance of the canals to farmers will considerably reduce the expenditure incurred on these services by the state. The farmers are now in charge of the minors, sub-minors and field channels operating in their command area. It is believed that this participatory system will be more convenient in terms of reducing bureaucratic hassle. The farmers now pay charges directly to WUAs. The WUAs are given the authority to fix charges for water according to their needs, and should consider within this the expenditure incurred on the maintenance of the office and staff of the WUA (MMISF Act-2005, Chapter II, and Section 27).

The other goals include, “protecting the environment and ensuring ecological balance. It is expected that in the due course of time the Association may also engage in any activity in the common interest of the members in the Command Area relating to irrigation and agriculture, such as the introduction of Drip and Sprinkler systems for optimising the use of water; developing farm ponds and community projects for exploiting groundwater; the

procurement and distribution of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides; the procurement and renting of agricultural implements; and the marketing and processing of agricultural produce from the Command Area and supplementary businesses like dairies and fisheries.” (MMISF Act-2005, Chapter II, Section 4.

The following sections demonstrate the role of bureaucracy on the terms of the implementation of policy of PIM, and its functioning in the local context.

4.3 Policy & Practice: Understanding the Role of Bureaucracy in the Implementation of Water Policy and Processes

The following section will show how the Irrigation Department occupies a central position in the functioning of WUAs in the region. The rhetoric of co-operation that is suggested between the farmers and the Irrigation Department has, in practice, become a way for the Irrigation Department to exercise greater control and dominance. Secondly, the claims that WUA reforms facilitate a bottom-up approach is not realised in the day-to-day running of the policy. On the contrary, it seems that the process of WUA reform is guided by the state and the local NGO. This became evident from the interviews I carried out with Irrigation Department Officers working at Class Four Level such as the Patkari- and with Divisional Level Officers, as well as through the story of Suryakant Gorey (a Canal Inspector at the Project). These stories highlight the continued importance of Irrigation Department staff in the process of water distribution in the area.

4.3.1 Bureaucracy at the Higher Levels

I first visited the Irrigation Department in Nashik district to understand the perspective of the Department on the implementation of the policy in the region. I found that the Department allocates additional responsibility to existing staff to look after the implementation process of WUAs. The responsibility for WUAs in the Nashik region is allocated to Mr Joshi, who is the Head Clerk in the Irrigation Department. Mr Joshi is a man in his 50s, and has been working on WUAs’ policy for a considerable amount of time. Most

visitors who visit the department to gain information about WUAs are directed to Mr Joshi's office. During my interview with Mr Joshi, he explained that WUAs' policy was originally initiated in the Nashik region by Bahusaheb Uphadey (a local leader and member of the local NGO, SVK). Uphadey eventually, in the 1990s, formed three other WUAs in the area of the Mahabalipur Dam, using guidelines provided by the Irrigation Department. The success of these WUAs inspired other farmers in the region to form WUAs in their own villages, and the number of WUAs in the area increased to twenty-four by the end of the year 2004.

According to Joshi, the success of the WUAs was achieved with the co-operation of the existing government bureaucrats, the NGO, and farmers. Joshi insisted that the 'Irrigation Department performed a leading role in the implementation process by providing a sort of 'blueprint' to farmers, and all farmers had to do was to follow this blueprint in order to form their WUAs' (Interview with Joshi, Irrigation Officer, in Nashik, June 2011). Mr Joshi also talked about the issues and problems faced by WUAs relating to accountability, excess use of water, and conflicts over field channels, etc. He attributes these conflicts to a lack of knowledge and awareness among farmers about the need for and importance of WUAs. He told me that some farmers do not understand the changing scenario relating to the availability of water, or the principles of managing and using water more efficiently. Also, he told me that co-operation among farmers was important in order to resolve differences, and that this would support and strengthen the functioning of WUAs (Interview with Joshi, Irrigation Officer, in Nashik, June 2011).

I found that, throughout the interview, Mr Joshi reiterated formal policy talk-without addressing any serious concerns about WUAs in the region. To me, Mr Joshi's response fits well with the idea of understanding bureaucratic development as a linear process, linked to minimal discussion and little human interaction. The process of bureaucracy demonstrates similar characteristics and repetitive processes at all levels, and tends to overlook the unique factors within each individual implementation process. During the course of further

interviews with other irrigation officers in the region, this general impression was strengthened.

A similar opinion to that offered by Mr Joshi was also offered by Mr Lele, a Civil Engineer, who has been working on a Dam project for ten years. According to Lele, 'co-operation among the farmers and the support of bureaucracy is important for the success of a project.' (Interview with Lele, a Canal Officer at the Irrigation Department, in Lakhanpur Taluka, July 2011.) When questioned about conflicts among farmers, Lele said that there had been conflict among farmers initially, but that over time the farmers were learning more and more about co-operation and the sharing of water. Lele said that the local NGO, SVK, had been working among the farmers for quite some time. Lele's response was colder and less engaging when he was asked to share information about the role of the Department and the difficulties faced by the Department relating to implementation of the policy. Similarly, the supervisor at the Mahabalipur Dam, Mr Deshmukh, was reluctant to share information about the processes used by the Department to implement the project (Interview with Mr Deshmukh, a Canal Supervisor at the Irrigation Department, in Lakhanpur Taluka, August 2011).

The answers given by all these interviewees appeared scripted, and the responses confirmed to the 'official position' of the Irrigation Department, which foregrounds the notion of co-operation among and with farmers as the most important element of success for the policy. The responses provided appeared to portray a negative view of the farmers, and the interviewees insinuated that some farmers lacked their own opinion, and merely followed the instructions of bureaucracy without question. However, the Irrigation Department was portrayed as having the know-how and tools to achieve the goals of the WUA. Simultaneously, discussion by the irrigation officers of the Department's official position laid blame on the farmers when something goes wrong in the system.

However, in contrast to the above-described interviewees, Mr Malsare, a Senior Officer at the Department, was more interested in engaging with the questions posed about implementation. Malsare has been working on the Dam

project for the last ten years; he explained that WUAs had long history of operating in the area- around thirty to forty years. He informed me that the first WUAs were established thirty to forty years ago in Malinagar, near Kopergaon in the Ahmednagar district (the Samavatsara Co-operative Society was the initiative of a Sugar Factory that was set up in 1930), and that the Irrigation Department used the blueprint of the Malinagar WUAs to implement new projects in different parts of the state. He explained that Maharashtra started implementing WUAs earlier than most other states in India. In Maharashtra, in the Nashik region, three WUAs were initially implemented twenty years ago- in the Ozar area tail-end part of the canal. Following on from these projects, farmers in other parts of the region formed WUAs in their villages (Interview with Mr Malsare, Senior Officer at the Irrigation Department, in Ozar, October 2012).

During the interview, Malsare referred to the work of the Nobel Prize-winning scholars, the Ostrom Collective Action, in order to describe the formation of voluntary associations which are run by users for users, and which take their own needs and conditions into consideration. However, Malsare explained that the Associations formed in the area had emerged not so much as a result of the voluntary action of the farmers, but as a result of continued persuasion by the Irrigation Department and the NGO working in the area. The Irrigation Department and the Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI) carried out training programmes, so that the farmers could operate the functioning of the WUAs. However, Malsare reiterated that WUAs were successful only when they were formed as a result of the collective will of the farmers, rather than the imposed will of a particular policy by the state. For Malsare, the success of the WUAs in the Nashik region is the outcome of the hard work of the Department, together with the co-operation of the NGO and farmers in the area. He said that it had not been an easy task to implement the policy in the region, and that the Department put a lot of effort into implementing the policy.

Similarly, Mr Chandrawanshi, a retired Irrigation Officer, told me that the WUA policy of promoting co-operation among farmers had resulted in the

better distribution of water in the region. He believes that the attention and resources given by the state are responsible for the success of the Mahabalipur project, and he re-iterated that the state had put much effort into the project. He felt it performed well. However, upon reading various records and reports (which are yet to be published, according to Chandrawanshi), it can be seen that, on many other projects, the state has failed to provide proper guidance to farmers. Indeed, it can be shown that the majority of the experimental projects run by the government have not been successful, and, in some cases, they have left water supply organisation in a worse state than it was previously. According to Mr Chandrawanshi, reports commissioned by the state about the condition of the WUAs projects paint a very gloomy picture. The reports claim that the idea of co-operation among farmers seems not to have been taken up seriously by farmers in most areas. Also, these reports raise the issue of the funding of these projects, and the reports state that the projects have not been as profitable as originally projected. From Chandrawanshi's response, it appeared that the story of the success of the Mahabalipur project, relating to the equitable distribution of water, and the collection of water charges (the project received state and national awards) was due to the proper care taken by the Irrigation Department to ensure that the project ran successfully (Interview with Mr Chandrawanshi, a retired Irrigation Officer, in Nashik, August 2012).

The main points to be gleaned from the above interviews can be summarised as follows:

1. In the context of WUAs policy, the central bureaucracy continues to emphasise the discourse of the growing scarcity of water, and the need for farmers to manage water properly. The Department believes that farmers should resolve their conflicts, and co-operate with each other in order to efficiently manage the distribution of irrigation water.
2. Although the Department recognises that the role of farmer co-operation is important for the implementation of the policy, it continues to reiterate that the role of the Irrigation Department is more important in terms of the formulation and implementation of the policy. The bureaucracy treats farmers as mere

recipients of the policy, rather than as active members in the implementation process of the policy. This leads us to consider the use of the rhetoric of co-operation, and what it means in practice. As pointed by Selby (2003), the term ‘co-operation’ needs to be understood specifically in the context of the water sector. For Selby (2003), co-operation does not necessarily mean ‘a good act’, but a ‘way of exercising domination by the dominant’ in the given context. The interviews and reports of Suryakant Gorey about the process of the allocation of water by the Irrigation Department to the farmers’ associations demonstrates that, in the name of ‘co-operation’, the state is exercising more power over these WUAs in the command area.

3. Differences can be noted in the nature of the replies given by the officers in the Irrigation Department. Officers such as Malsare perform the task of spokesperson for the policy, and they were happy to engage with the wider research community, and were comfortable to contribute their wider domain of knowledge to the discussion. However, other officers, such as Lele and Deshmukh, were more inclined to confirm and reiterate the ‘official position’ of the Department, and they avoided more open discussion about the issue. There seems to be an informal division of labour within the Department, whereby some officers, such as Lele and Deshmukh, are expected to carry out the necessary groundwork for the implementation process of the policy; while more senior officers act as official spokespeople for the policy. These differences in approach do not arise merely because of differences in individual capabilities, but are the result of the formation of a larger structure of bureaucratic hierarchy in the Department. By contrast, Mr Chandrawanshi, from the Dalit community, took a more critical perspective towards the implementation process of the policy.

4.3.2 The Role of Suryakant Gorey

The role of Suryakant Gorey, the Canal Supervisor of the Mahabalipur Dam, shows how bureaucracy continues to play an important role in the functioning of the WUAs in the command area. Gorey is in his fifties now, and he lives in the nearby area. He comes from the Nashik region, and he has been working

on the canal for a long time. Gorey plays an important role in the functioning of WUAs in the region. According to staff at the Parvati WUAs, the policy of WUAs is successful in the region because of officers like Gorey, who make an effort to resolve differences among farmers and who take on the responsibility of providing water to farmers. The Parvati WUA personnel explained that, without the contribution of officers like Gorey, WUAs would have ceased to exist by now. It is important to understand the appreciation the Parvati staff have for Gorey, in light of the fact that the Parvati WUA always exceeds its available quota of water. Forming a good relationship with Gorey can facilitate the management of the demand for water.

Gorey plays an important role in water allocation to the WUAs. He is able to address differences between WUAs and assess their water requirements. When there is conflict over the distribution of water, Gorey tries to resolve differences among WUAs with other members of the Associations. He watches the DY canal, Sub-Minor Three, which goes to Saraswati WUA in the Shyampur village. According to staff members and other farmers, Sub-Minor Three used to be under the control of Parvati WUA, but recently Sub-Minor formed its own WUA- the Saraswati WUA- which provides water to the farmers in the Shyampur village. During my research, it became clear that members of the Parvati WUA were not really interested in sharing water with the members of Saraswati WUA. The Parvati employees claim this is because they have to bear losses that occur during the transportation of water from the main canal to the lower end of the DY canal. Also, Parvati complains that they have to maintain a certain level of water in the distributor canal so that the farmers of the Saraswati WUA can receive an adequate water pressure to water their crops. Therefore, in order to maintain the required water pressure, the Parvati has to close certain outlets and withhold the supply of the water to its members. This puts Parvati WUA under constant pressure, and any imbalance in water pressure creates rage among the farmers of the Saraswati WUA. Thus, there is a constant threat of conflict between the two associations during water rotation.

It is during these conditions of conflict that Gorey plays a prominent role in trying to resolve the issues between the two associations. During water rotation, he maintains a constant presence on the canal in order to prevent conflict between the two WUAs. During one rotation period, in spite of wishing to attend the marriage of a relative, he did not leave, because he feared there would be conflict in his absence. Also, on one occasion, he returned to Rampur from Nashik because of complaints made by Saraswati farmers about the low flow of water. Morley plays an important role in the allocation process of water to different WUAs in the Mahabalipur command area.

Furthermore, I noticed that it is important for the Secretary of the WUA to maintain good relations with officers such as Gorey, in order to ensure there is an adequate amount of water for the WUA- for example; if the WUA is running short of water owing to a growing demand from farmers, or for some other reason, and it needs additional amounts of water to meet the demand of the farmers. If the Secretary has a good relationship with Gorey, then he can seek more water from the Department without much trouble. However, if the Secretary does not have a good relationship with Gorey, then it is a difficult task for the Secretary to gain access to additional water. I observed this second scenario with the Secretary of Lakshmi WUA, who seems not to have a good relationship with Gorey. This lack of connection resulted in Gorey issuing threats to the Secretary at Lakshmi if he exceeded the given limit of water.

Sunil (Secretary of Lakshmi WUA) told me that, during one rotation, when the WUA could not meet water demands from the farmers, the Secretary requested an extra amount from Gorey, but Gorey refused it. The Secretary even asked the members of the Managing Committee to intervene in the matter and request that Gorey provide the extra amount of water. However, the members of Managing Committee advised that the Secretary must manage the situation on his own. In the end, the Secretary asked his cousin, Bajirao, a Director of the PLA, to intervene in the matter. It was only after NanduDada's intervention that Gorey agreed to provide the additional amount of water to the Saptsrungi. However, after this, the Secretary found it even harder to manage

Gorey, who would continue to issue subtle threats about the consequences of exceeding the given quota of water. However, Parvati often exceeded their given quota of water.

This situation meant that the Lakshmi Secretary always had to find the balance between the needs of the farmers and the given quota of water. The above incident also shows that, in the case of not getting any help from the bureaucracy, the Secretary then has to mobilise social relations or social capital at a higher level. Therefore, by maintaining a good relationship with Gorey, life becomes easier for staff at Parvati, who do not seem to experience any problems with water rationing. At Parvati, both Sanjeev and Vikas ensure that they always entertain Gorey, and they always ask him to join in with the social events organised by the different farmers in the area. In this way, they ensure that Parvati continues to enjoy favours relating to the access of water. The favouritism shown by Gorey and the Irrigation Department towards Parvati is resented by the Secretary of Lakshmi WUA. Gorey was even able to use his influence on the canals to secure a job for his nephew in the PLA. Similarly, Raju, a young farmer in his twenties who is a member of the Gorey family and the brother-in-law of an Irrigation Officer, was able to secure a job as a Canal Inspector at the PLA. In a way, it shows that Gorey does, on the one hand, play the 'neutral' role of mediator, but, on the other hand, he also operates through patronage and personal relationships.

There are other cases of employees in the Irrigation Department who receive privileges, and even money, from the WUA staff. Warey, who belongs to a lower-caste community, is in his fifties now, and will be retiring very soon. The WUA staff give him money for food and occasionally for alcohol, to ensure his co-operation in the allocation of the water. These stories of the relationships between employees at the Irrigation Department and WUAs staff reveal the significance of informal networking for the functioning of the WUA. It is interesting to see the way these relationships are put to use, both by the Irrigation Department as well as WUA staff, in the implementation process of the policy.

Another interesting aspect of the dynamics of these relationships is the role played by caste. Although, on the surface, these relationships appear to be based simply on money, influence, and privileges; upon closer examination there is also a caste dimension to the relationships. Members who belong to the same caste group seem to form informal alliances. Also, because Gorey is from a dominant caste, he receives respectful addresses such as ‘Tatya’ (this is an informal way of addressing an elder person in a family). However, Warey is treated as a mere employee, and he is often addressed very casually and in a less serious fashion.

Many staff members at the WUAs are very critical of Warey’s work, and are constantly pointing out his inefficiency. One employee from a dominant caste claims that Warey is enjoying the privilege of being a government employee ‘at no cost’, because most of his work is now carried out by WUAs staff. Although both Gorey and Warey enjoy privileges as a result of their employment in the Irrigation Department, the manner in which WUAs staff treats them varies greatly. In India, it is not only an employee’s job status, but also his or her caste identity that influences social and work interactions, and this is apparent in the dynamics of the relationships between WUAs and the larger members of the state bureaucracy. Secondly, these relationships show that having a family or community member working in the Irrigation Department makes it easier for dominant caste members to negotiate and further their interests in the sector.

It is not only caste relationships, but also class relationships that provide accessibility to bureaucracy. Unlike the Secretary at Parvati, the Secretary of Lakshmi is a small farmer, who cultivates non-cash crops like soya beans. His family lives on his minimal salary, provided by the WUA, and his father’s retirement income. I observed that the Secretary of Lakshmi finds it difficult to maintain a proper relationship with the bureaucracy, and other Irrigation Officers overlook him. However, he has overcome these limitations by putting to use his knowledge about water management to push for his demands. He is excellent at mathematical calculations; he has gained professional qualifications, and he has attended a training course at the Water and Land

Management Institute (WALMI) as the Secretary of the WUA. He keeps a close eye on the allotted water allocation, and he maintains a proper balance sheet of the water distributed by the Irrigation Department to WUAs in his village. His years of job experience, and his interest in learning, have given him expert status. This shows that knowledge and social capital can mediate class difference.

During my conversations with Sunil (The Secretary of Lakshmi WUA,) he pointed out inadequacies in the management of the irrigation system: according to him, a lack of precise knowledge about the availability of water makes it easier for people like Gorey to try to fool the farmers by providing inadequate water figures. However, he finds it fairly easy to note any lack of precision or anomalies in the measurement of water, and then rightly points this out by. The Secretary uses his knowledge as a tool that helps him to negotiate with Gorey, to ensure he gets an adequate supply of water. Secondly, Sunil is close to a relative of Bajirao- who is the leader of PLA- and, in cases of major crises, he is sought out in order to use his relationship with Bajirao to access an adequate amount of water. By contrast, Shantaram is a WUA employee who belongs to a lower-caste community. He has been working for the WUAs for a number of years, but he finds it difficult to relate to the bureaucracy of the system. Shantaram explained that he felt excluded by the dominant caste members, who do not include him in many normal day-to-day work activities. He said that dominant caste members find it easier to co-ordinate work with irrigation officers who belong to the same caste as them (informal talk with Sunil Patil, Secretary of Lakshmi WUA, during water rotation, December, 2011).

4.4 The Role of the Local NGO: Samajik Vikas Kendra (Centre for Social Development)

In this section, I will discuss the role of the NGO Samajik Vikas Kendra (SVK) in the area. I collected my information mainly through informal discussions with the members of the NGO, and by attending different events organised by the NGO at OzarTaluka (12 km away from Rampur village). In this section I will describe a visit made by a farmer team from Yeola that was

co-ordinated by the SVK at the Ozar WUA office. This shows how such an event is organised by the NGO in order to motivate farmers to form WUAs in their villages. I will also describe other events, such as the Pani Parishad (Water Conference) organised at Gangapur Taluka, Nashik district (20 km away from the village of Rampur) in August 2010, and an inaugural ceremony for buildings at Shyampur. These stories show how the bureaucracy of the NGO and the local leaders works, and how farmers are motivated to form WUAs in their region. The majority of my informal discussions were carried out with Balaji Mawale (Vice President of SPK), who is an active member of the organisation, and who often attends different events and meetings organised by the WUAs.

Image 4: Function organised by SPK celebrating the birth anniversary of Bapusaheb Upadhey, a founder member of the SVK



The local NGO, SVK, was founded by the late Mr. Bhausaheb Upadhye in Ozar (Nasik) in the 1980s. Bapusaheb was elected Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) when the Mahabalipur dam was being built, and his characteristically relentless and vigorous efforts played a major part in the demand for the RBC. He was accompanied in all his efforts by his close colleague (and then Vice President) Balaji Mawale. Bhausaheb Updhye, along with his colleagues Mr. Balaji Mawale (who is currently a leading member of the SPK) and Mr. Rajabhau Kulkarni, a local farmer in the Ozar village, initiated the formation of WUAs in the region. SPK is now run by the daughter and son-in-law of Bahausaheb Updhye. Balaji Mawale is popularly

known as 'Bhau' among the farmers and members of the Irrigation Department, and he is the backbone of the organisation in the area. Mawale is a local resident in Ozar, and has been active in the organisation for a long time. The organisation has offices in the Nashik district, and the offices are run by its members- who are mainly retired irrigation officers, such as Mr Anantrao Joshi and Mr Mali (the son-in-law of Updhye).

In order to gain an understanding of the role of the NGO in the region, I regularly visited the offices of the SPK to conduct informal discussions with the members of the NGO. Every year, the NGO organises a function celebrating the birthday of Bhaushaeb at the Mahatma Jotirao Phule WUA office in OzarTaluka. The NGO assists in co-ordinating visits by teams of farmers, irrigation officers, and different international organisations. As noted earlier, the NGO played a significant role in the process of building WUAs in the command area. The founding members of Parvati and Lakshmi (the two WUAs in the village of Rampur) recognise the contribution made by the NGO in terms of providing guidance, helping out with paper work, and settling disputes among the members. Members such as Mawale describe the entire process as a 'movement' to ensure the 'farmers' rights to water', where farmers took inspiration from WUAs formed in OzarTaluka, Nashik district to form WUAs in their villages. The project is regularly visited by teams of farmers, researchers, and others at a national as well as an international level. In the next few paragraphs, I will describe a visit from a team of farmers from the Yeola region. They visited in order to find out how the NGO co-ordinates its activities with the farmers and the irrigation department. The discussions that resulted from this visit provide valuable information about the way the NGO helps to organise WUAs in the area.

It was Balaji who told me about the visit from the farmers of Yeola, and he asked if I would like to join the meeting at the Mahatma Jotirao Phule office in Ozar. At the meeting, I met up with other members, such as Kulkarni and Vabale. Generally, the farmers in the area are asked by the PLA to meet the other farmers visiting the project to share their experience in terms of the formation and functioning of the WUA. The PLA and WUAs want farmers to

attend such meetings, because it helps other farmers learn more about the system of WUAs. Secondly, if local farmers attend these meetings, it makes a good impression on visitors in terms of the active role of WUA or PLA in the area. However, I found that farmers residing in the command area of the Mahabalipur project avoid going to such meetings because they feel it is a time-consuming activity, and, usually, they try to avoid these duties owing to their busy schedule of farming activities. Therefore, it is often difficult for the WUAs to collect farmers from the local area to participate in organised visits by farmers from other areas. In response, the WUA have adopted a strategy whereby they ask a few selected members to attend the meeting and share their experiences. I found that the farmers who attend the meeting are usually 'well-to-do' farmers, who cultivate grapes or roses.

The team of farmers arrived at around seven in the evening at Ozar. The meeting was chaired by Vabale and Kulkarni (who is the son of Rajabhau Kulkarni, and who worked alongside Bhausahab in the initial years of the formation of the WUA). Both men are from Ozar. They explained how the WUAs were formed in the region by the farmers with the co-operation of the Irrigation Department and the local NGO SPK. This explanation followed by a 'question and answer' session designed to address doubts about the modality, functions, approach and other aspects of the WUAs. This session was facilitated by Mawale, who tried to ensure that the farmers were able to understand the process of instituting a WUA. This is the general pattern of all the meetings organised by the NGO.

During the meeting, Mawale explained that, in the early stages of the formation of WUAs, there was much conflict between farmers over the supply of water; most of the time, the farmers would deny supplies to other farmers in the area and, therefore, violate the norms relating to the timeframe for watering the crops. In order to allay these fears, Mawale gave an example of how conflict among the farmers is addressed by the WUA. Mawale explained that, in the past, the local WUA in the command area had a farmer who would regularly create a problem with the supply of water, and would deny access to other farmers in the area (Balaji Mawale, Vice President of local NGO,

Farmers meeting, Ozar, in October 2011). Therefore, the organisation, along with the members of the WUA, decided to 'teach the farmer a lesson'. On the day of the water rotation, the WUA gave water to the farmer, but the staff asked the other farmers not take water from him until the WUA staff asked them to do so. The farmer watered his crops, as usual, taking a longer time than is prescribed by the WUA. After finishing, he waited for the staff of the WUA so that he could then give other farmers access to the water, but the staff of the WUA did not turn up to his farm. Eventually, he had to ask the neighbouring farmers to take the water, but the farmers were told to refuse. Finally, he went to look for staff of the WUA in the village, but he was unable to find them, and began to worry about the excess water he was holding onto. Ultimately, the farmer realised what was happening when WUA staff arrived at his field and asked the other farmers to take the water.

Mawale explained that, through these small acts, the organisation was able to maintain the norms of the WUAs, and, additionally, the farmers realised the significance of the WUAs in the distribution of water. Mawale explained that the employees at the WUAs are local farmers who live in the village. Therefore, it was possible that the staff of the WUA might come into conflict with their own family members, due to the nature of their work. However, the WUAs urged staff not to listen to their family member's views, but to carry out their duties honestly in order to equitably distribute the water.

Mawale taught the farmers the simple principle of '*tutenparantetanaychanahi*' ('do not stretch it until it breaks'). Mawale explained that the NGO ensures that differences among farmers, such as field channels, encroachment on land, etc., should not be extended to the point where they break the relationship between the farmers and the WUAs. Mawale said that it is futile to stretch conflict to a point which harms the interests of the WUA. There should always be a space left for a dialogue between the two parties involved in the conflict and the WUA. He reiterated that the aim of the WUA is to resolve differences, and to enhance co-operation among farmers. This principle is equally applied to relationships between the WUAs and the bureaucracy of the Irrigation Department in terms of the management of WUAs in the command area, and

no problem must be ‘stretched’ to the extent that it disrupts the co-ordination between the Irrigation Department and the farmers. I observed that, at most of the meetings organised by the Project Level Association (PLA), the NGO takes a balanced view in order to address differences among the farmers and the staff of the Irrigation Department (Balaji Mawale, Vice President of local NGO, Farmers meeting, Ozar, in October 2011).

When asked about the need for WUAs, Mawale talked about the growing scarcity of water in general around the globe. Then, Mawale asked the farmers to reflect back on their own previous experiences and the difficulties they faced under the direct rule of the Irrigation Department. He mentioned that these difficulties included corruption, the inability of the Patkari to maintain a regular water schedule, delays in the water supply, the dominance of the rich farmers, and the inability of the poor to fight for a share of water, etc. Mawale described the growing inability of the Irrigation Department to manage the irrigation system. Mawale then explained to farmers how a farmer’s involvement in the process of the distribution of water can help to resolve the difficulties faced by all the farmers. Following on from this, Mawale explained the growing drive of the state towards the privatisation of water, and how water is allotted to big industries. He explained that, even with the ever-growing number and significance of big industries, the state is still responsible for supplying water to these industries. Therefore, if the farmers do not form WUAs, and start to register their land, they will eventually lose their claim over the water allotted to them by the state!

In respect of the allotment of water by the State of Maharashtra, irrigation comes first, followed by supplies for drinking, and then for industry. Interestingly, Mawale explained away the significance of registering land with the WUA as a side effect of the bureaucracy of living in India. He said that this is essential so that, when excess water is not being used, it can be diverted to other areas of need- such as industries that pay higher charges to the state. Mawale asserted that farmers should form a WUA and register their land in order to discontinue the practice of ‘taking water by illegal means’; in order to ‘save money’, and in order to avoid harming the farmers’ interests over a

period of time. Mawale encouraged farmers to form a WUA to save the water allotted to them. The same reasons were often used by Mawale to encourage different farmers to set up a WUA.

In the question and answer session, the farmers were allowed to discuss issues amongst themselves. During this discussion, I found that most of the farmers were convinced by the logic of Mawale's arguments, especially about the inability of the state to manage the irrigation system, and the need to protect their water from the industrial sector. One visiting farmer, Patil, an elderly man in sixties, said that, "Now the elephant has gone away, and only the tail is left behind, so there is no use holding on to the tail. It is the time the farmers helped themselves, and got financial help from the World Bank to organise themselves and form a WUA." The meeting ended with a vote of thanks given by the staff of the Mahatma Jotirao Phule WUA for visiting the project.

The entire process of the meeting demonstrated the influential role of the NGO, and especially of Mawale, in terms of organisation and conduct. The success of the WUA and NGO in the region, and the formation of the PLA, received national recognition (the project received the National Productivity Award for 2004 from the Government of India). Its leading member, Mawale, acquired a high status for leading this movement in the area. Mawale continues to chair different programmes organised by the Irrigation Department, together with leading politicians in the district as well as in the state.

The event of inauguration of office buildings of three WUAs at Shyampur village was organised by the members of three WUAs, with the help of the Irrigation Department, in July 2012. The event was attended by a Member of Parliament, Mr Dhanraj Mahale, who is a Member for Legislation, Mr Harishchandra Chavan, and the local leader, Mr. Yashwantrao Pawar, who is a member of Zilla Parishad. All these leaders respectfully acknowledged the role of the late Bhausaheb Upadhyay and of Mawale in establishing WUAs in the region. Also, the members of the WUA asked the Member of Parliament for funds to build the library, and to purchase other necessary materials for the WUA offices. Reflecting back on these demands made by the WUA, it was

clear that they originated from Mawale, who suggested them in his speech. Also, he asked the WUA to ask the Members of Parliament to increase the height of the dam, in order to increase its water storage capacity. Additionally, Mawale argued that the monsoon rains were becoming more uncertain, and in these conditions the farmers found it difficult to ensure the proper supply of water for the cultivation of crops. Another factor behind his request is the growing demand for water from farmers in the area. Therefore, it is clear that the authorities will need to think about alternatives that will resolve the water crisis currently faced by farmers in the area. Mawale suggested that one alternative available to the authority would be to increase the height of the dam (Balaji Mawale, at the inauguration of office buildings of three WUAs at Shyampur village, organised by the members of three WUAs with the help of the Irrigation Department, in July 2012.). The Member of Parliament took note of this demand, and promised the farmers that he would look into the matter, and, if possible, try to do it.

The second event organised was the Pani Parishad (Water Conference) at Gangapur Taluka in September 2012. This was organised by farmers on the Right Bank of the Gangapur Canal (the canal is approximately 20 km away from the Mahabalipur Dam). The event was attended by a Member of Parliament, a Member for Legislation and a senior retired Irrigation Officer, Mr Chandrawanshi, as well as Mawale. The platform was also shared by members of leading political parties, such as Shiv Sena and the NCP. All of the guests invited addressed Mawale respectfully, and thanked him for the work he was doing for WUAs in the area. The Member of Parliament addressed Mawale as 'Kaka' (meaning 'uncle' or 'elder'). Time and time again, the Member reiterated that Mawale was the best guide to help farmers to understand the significance of WUAs in terms of protecting farmers' rights to water.

It was at this function that I came to know for the first time about the issue of sharing water among the farmers of the Gangapur taluka and the Nashik city. At the function, Mawale spoke to the farmers about the growing 'luxury of water' enjoyed by the people of the Nashik district at a cost to the poorer

farmers, who strive day and night to save water for their farms. He requested that the farmers strengthen the movement of WUAs in order to protect the farmers' share of water from growing populations in the cities (Balaji Mawale, vice President of local NGO, SPK, at Water Conference, Gangapur Taluka, September, 2012). This request was strongly supported by the senior member of the Irrigation Department, Mr Chandrawanshi, who asked the farmers not to wait for the completion of the repair and rehabilitation work of canals, but to start forming the WUAs immediately in order to protect water for the cultivation of crops. In the discussions that followed, it was clear that farmers in the area of Gangapur Taluka were fed up with the growing demand for water from cities and industries. The farmers felt that what Mawale and Chandrawanshi were saying should be seriously considered. In the midst of all this, it became clear that the NGO has a wider scope to decide what their level of involvement is in each project. The NGO is meant to maintain contact with all the actors involved in a project at all levels, including senior officers in the bureaucracy, and with local farmers in the command area. The general role of the NGO is to ensure that the views of all the participants are considered in the process of the implementation of policy.

Image 5: The farmer's address by the local NGO SVK member, Mawale, at the inaugural function of official building of Shyampur WUA



The NGO demonstrates versatility in their application of language when dealing with bureaucracy, with farmers, and with others visiting the projects. This dexterity helps to enhance their position in the implementation process. This became evident when I attended the monthly meeting organised by the PLA at the Rampur office. I found that the NGO activists are highly respected, and are offered seats next to the President and Vice President of the PLA. During these meetings, it is Mawale, rather than the farmers themselves, who debate issues with the bureaucracy. However, Mawale ensures that the farmers do not get confused by the bureaucrats' use of technocratic language, and he acts as a translator in this respect for the farmers. In general, farmers seemed to accept the information provided by the NGO activists. Also, WUAs staff often approached NGO activists in order to help them resolve their own issues about the functioning of the WUAs.

The position enjoyed by the NGO makes it difficult to categorise their role clearly. To identify them merely as catalysts in the process of policy implementation would not be correct. The NGO occupies a key strategic position, and due to this they can exercise power in the process. However, the question arises of how this power is used to benefit small and poor farmers in the village. I found that this is not an easy question to answer in light of the observations I made during my field work. The NGO have a dual role in the implementation process: they assist farmers and bureaucracy, and are simultaneously assisted by bureaucracy in gaining other projects.

The SVK is now working with the Irrigation Department on another project to implement a WUA. The SPK gained this project because of the contribution it made to make the Mahabalipur a successful project; it became clear that the SPK was concerned about its success in order that they be able to capitalise on said success to gain another project. The inbuilt interest of the NGO in the project raises questions about the credibility of the NGO. Therefore, it is appropriate to classify the role of the NGO as similar to that of a 'midwife', who is concerned with delivering a project successfully in order to maintain its own livelihood. In a way, the NGO, along with the government, plays the role of a facilitator in the process of implementation of the reforms.

However, despite claims that the NGO reaches out to all farmers in the area, I found that the NGO is active mainly among big farmers who engage in the process of WUAs. One of the obvious reasons for this might be that no activists of the NGO organisation live in the Rampur village. Also, villagers tend to identify themselves more with local leadership in the village, rather than with an external organisation. Therefore, organisations have to rely on local leadership for the implementation of government policy in the area. This leadership is usually drawn from the dominant caste family members living in a village, and organisations have to form alliances with this leadership in order to effect the implementation of policy. This is because local farmers tend to obey local leadership rather than outside leadership; either in order to promote their own family interests, or because they fear the local leadership in their village. The result of this is that organisations such as the NGO cannot bypass local leadership when they want to implement their policy.

4.5 Bureaucracy, the NGO and the Dominant Farmers: Understanding the ‘Nexus’

In this section, I will explore the relationship between the NGO, the Irrigation Department and the farmers. I will relay three examples to demonstrate how the bureaucracy of the Irrigation Department and NGO works to dominate the ‘management of WUAs’, in spite of claims made in favour of empowering the WUAs. The first example concerns the attempts made to form a union of WUA staff in response to abuse and violence directed towards these staff by the farmers. The second example concerns the failure of a joint inspection committee (that includes farmers and NGOs) to renovate the canal system. The third example focuses on the politics involved at Project Level Association in terms of constituting the managing committee.

One incident occurred few years back during the water rotation period. The incident is narrated by Sunil Patil (Secretary of the Lakshmi WUA) and was later confirmed by Ratan Jhoomrey (Secretary of the PLA). The incident highlights the nature of the relationship between WUA officers and farmers. Both of these incidences were relayed to me during the water rotation in February, 2012.

A few years ago, personnel at the Lakshmi WUA were threatened by a group of powerful farmers belonging to a dominant family in the village. The farmers illegally broke the outlet of the canal and took water during late night hours. The Secretary and the Patkari tried to prohibit the farmers from taking the water illegally, but the farmers did not listen to him. Instead, they issued threats. The Secretary immediately contacted the representative of the NGO, Balaji, who advised him to leave the area immediately without getting into debate with the farmers. Balaji promised that he would talk to his committee members about the incident. In spite of this assurance, the Secretary and his colleagues did not feel secure, and so they wrote to the SPK asking for the necessary measures to be put in place to ensure their security. Additionally, the Secretary met with a senior leader of a left-wing political party in the district in order to get advice about the matter. The left-wing leader advised the Secretary to form a union of staff, and then to present their demands to the Irrigation Department. Therefore, the Secretary got together with representatives from twenty-four other WUAs in the area in order to do so. However, the SPK was tipped off that meetings had been held with the aim of forming a union, and so the SPK invited those who had initiated the process to meet with them to discuss any difficulties in advance of forming the union.

When the SPK meeting took place, Balaji and other irrigation officers listened to the complaints and promised to resolve the issues as soon as possible. However, Balaji and the Irrigation Department asked the Secretary and his colleagues not to form a union, and instead to try to resolve the issues at Association level. The Secretary and his colleagues agreed to this request, and just over a month later the Irrigation Department drafted rules that aimed to revise provisions for employee safety, and to revise salaries annually. The two staff members who had initiated the process received revised salaries and gave up the idea of forming a union, and the dispute came to an end. The legislation of the 2005 Act empowers WUAs to enforce the law with the help of local police officers against farmers who interrupt the functioning of the WUAs by carrying out illegal acts. When I spoke to the Secretary, who initiated the process of formation of the union of the employees of the WUAs, he said that

it would have been very difficult to challenge the will of the dominant people, the NGO, and the Irrigation Department.

This is the first story of the formation of a 'nexus' to try to restrain differences among farmers for the sake of maintaining the good image of the project. The act of the formation of a union of workers was considered to be a political act, which would eventually bring issues relating to the rights of the workers to light. In order to avoid the politicization of the WUA in this way, the NGO and the state acted together to prevent it. This move serves the interests of the state as well as the NGO, because a union of workers would eventually question the social and economic rights of workers, as well as questioning wages and provident funds. These are issues that the state wants to avoid. Secondly, the formation of a union would show that differences exist among different farmers, and that there is a lack of full co-operation among the farmers. This will harm the idea of the WUA as a co-operative organization, run in harmony by the farmers themselves.

The process of renovation of the canal and the handing over of the responsibility of the canal to the PLA is another example of how the state exercised its dominance in terms of the implementation of the policy.

Under the leadership of Bajirao and Balaji Mawale (the Vice President of local NGO SVK), the farmers removed illegal pipes from the canal and cleared the canal of illegal connections. This incident gave legitimacy to the WUAs as an organisation that safeguards the rights of the farmers. In this struggle, Bajirao emerged as the representative of the farmers and eventually he obtained more authority within the circle of the WUA members. After the success of the removal of illegal pipes, the joint inspection committee was formed by the representatives of the farmers and the irrigation department to inspect the damage to the system and renovate it. According to WUA norms, before the transfer of management of the irrigation system to the collective body consisting of WUA farmers, the NGO and the Irrigation Department must monitor the renovation work carried out by the Irrigation Department. It is only after the completion of the renovation work and the testing of the system to check for leakages or other faults that the PLA can take charge of the full

management of the irrigation system. However, in practice, the intentions of the joint inspection committee to monitor the renovation work did not work out. In fact, I found that the system still continues to leak, and this has resulted in a considerable loss of water.

Mr Maludey (a former member of the managing committee of the PLA) told me that, during the time of ‘renovation’, he stood against the committee members’ decision to go ahead with the process of the implementation of the reforms without completely verifying the working of the canal system. Mr Maludey’s opinion was that it was too early for the PLA to go ahead with the reforms and take charge of the management of the irrigation system, especially when renovation work was still needed. Mr Maludey’s told me that, time and time again, he asked committee members not to ‘fall for’ the false promises of the Department, and to take charge of the canal themselves, because it was not certain that, once the PLA took responsibility of the canals, the Department would fulfil their obligations to complete the renovation work. In this case, the PLA would have been left with no other choice but to improve the system with its own money (The Irrigation Department is still carrying out the work on the main canal).

During informal talks with other committee members and staff at the WUAs, I verified some of the information given by Mr Maludey. The staff at the PLA complained that the Department had not really put any effort into the canal renovation work, and, therefore, the PLA and the 24 WUAs working on the project still have to bear a loss of water, owing to no work or very poor quality maintenance on certain parts of the canal system. During every rotation, there was some problem in connection with the rupture of the canal system, breakages of the system, or leakages in the system. During the last winter rotation of 2012, the rotation was put on hold for two days due to huge leakages in the canal system. The committee members were worried about the leakage, but no one had spoken to the farmers about it. There was some secrecy maintained around the issue, and some members were not ready to share information, even with me. However, during the monthly meeting of PLA members and the staff of the Irrigation Department, a debate took place

between the committee members and the Department. The committee members said that they held the Department responsible for loss of the water, but, even though the Department had an explanation for these events, they preferred to maintain their silence about the issues. Therefore, it appears that the concern of the committee members holds no value in the eyes of the Department.

The issue of renovation and maintenance work was raised by the PLA during a meeting with a World Bank representative, organised by the PLA and farmers to understand the current situation. I learned that there is still a significant amount of work that has not yet been completed by the contractor. In fact, the contractor had 'run away', leaving the task half-finished; he put forward the excuse that it was not profitable for him to continue with the work. However, rather than finding an alternative contractor, the Irrigation Department was more interested in pursuing official proceedings against the original contractor. Also, during the meetings about the contractor, the representatives of the Irrigation Department spoke in English to discuss the issue, whilst the WB representative used the Hindi language, so that the farmers would be able to understand the proceedings. Also, I was later informed by the farmers that only one contractor was given the chance to tender, and he won the contract! The presence of a minister at the meetings revealed that the State was eager to ensure the implementation of their policy.

Furthermore, the problem of illegal connections still seems to remain. The staff at the PLA told me that it is not necessary to remove all illegal connections from the system, but that many had been removed by the PLA. Also, during a surprise visit carried out in the Rabi season (during the month of November) by a team of PLA committee members and staff, and representatives from the Irrigation Department, it was found that many farmers were still pumping water illegally. During this visit, some members of the PLA got into an argument with a farmer who was illegally pumping water from the dam, and, rather than becoming fearful about prosecution, the illegal pumper retorted that he had paid his charges, and so was entitled to the water.

Malpractices carried out by staff at the Irrigation Department have also been brought to the attention of the PLA during regular monthly meetings held at the Rampur offices. Additionally, PLA inspectors have noticed leakages in the canal, damage to the course of the main canal, the presence of wrongly-marked scales at the outlet gate, and wrongly-marked gauge meters. All these issues have been brought to the attention of the Irrigation Department staff at regular meetings. The issue of the wrongly-marked scales has been informally discussed by PLA members, who seem to be really worried about it, and some PLA members have become suspicious of the intentions of the Irrigation Department. Finally, the PLA members have noticed the loss of enormous amounts of water during the two previous years. During these discussions, the Irrigation Department preferred to remain silent about these issues. Later on, when I asked Bajirao about the leakages, he said that the PLA's continuous raising of issues with the Irrigation Department has not achieved much success, owing to the irresponsible behaviour of the Irrigation Department.

I found that some incidents revealed to me the way political parties intervene in the process of the implementation of the policy. Bajirao, who played an influential role in forming the WUAs, as well as the PLA, belongs to the dominant National Congress Party (NCP), which has shared power with the Congress Party at state level as well as at centre level. When the PLA was created in Rampur in 2003, Bajirao dominated the local political scene. He was the head of the Panchayat of Rampur, and an influential party member within the NCP at Taluka level. Bajirao did not wish to share space with other Committee members in the process of the implementation and formation of the PLA. At this time, he was the un-opposed leader of the PLA, and he had the power to direct the formation of the PLA at Mahabalipur. Therefore, when the Minister of Irrigation asked the PLA to speed up the implementation of the policy, Bajirao had no choice but to follow the instructions of his leaders. Also, it was in Bajirao's personal interests to enhance his position in the eyes of the senior leader of the party, and so he was motivated to compromise the interests of the PLA to favour state policy, and to safeguard his own position and interests in the party. Therefore, it is through the use of local networks that neo-liberal policy is fulfilled.

The third incident involves the formation of the managing committee of the PLA. During informal talks with members of the committee, staff members, NGO activists, and the employees of the Irrigation Department, it became clear to me that the PLA is far from being the apolitical organisation it claims to be. It is quite clear that Bajirao has played a significant role in establishing the PLA in the area. Bajirao is a member of the dominant Maratha family, and has acted as the village head for the last ten years. Bajirao also has an influential position in the NCP party. The success of the PLA has strengthened community belief in the leadership skills of Dada. Dada was the unopposed President of the PLA for two years after its formation in 2003. However, after a change in legislation as a result of the MMISF Act 2005, he had to step down as President of the PLA. The Act requires the PLA to rotate the position of President among members belonging to the head, middle and tail of the region.

The MMISF Act affected the political dynamics of the PLA, and for the first time, members belonging to the tail region had the opportunity to become President. This meant that new influential members emerged from the Mali community of Shyampur. The Mali community is thought of as economically well off in comparison with other non-dominant caste communities, but politically weak in comparison to the dominant Maratha community in the area. The Act made it possible for the Mali community to roll the political dice in their favour. Within the Mali community there is a general feeling that, in spite of their economic success, they still belong to a neglected and marginalised group in the area.

The two villages of Rampur and Shyampur differ with each other both economically and politically. The introduction of the Act has shifted power somewhat away from the dominant Maratha group in the village, and has created a rift in associations among the members. The members belonging to the Mali community are not in a position to listen to the Maratha lobby, and did not intend to give up their opportunity to claim the post of President of the PLA. However, after the intervention of the local NGO member Balaji Mawale, and pressure from the Irrigation Department to resolve the difference,

a compromise was made among the members of the two groups. The compromise was that after Dada, another Maratha, Mr Sangle (who is currently the regional Head of the Bhartiya Janta Party) would become President, with a member of the Mali community acting as Vice President of the PLA. Also, it was promised that, after this, the Presidency would be given to a member from the tail region.

This compromise was not well- received by most members, but in order to maintain the image and good work of the PLA, nobody challenged the compromise. In the last few days of my fieldwork, there were talks about dissolving the Committee of the PLA before its term ended, in order to conduct fresh elections to be in line with the elections of the WUAs in the region. The logic put forward by the Maratha members was that this voting pattern would harmonise the elections for both the WUAs and the PLA, so as to avoid confusion and create administrative efficiencies. However, this move could also be interpreted as a tactic to sideline the claims of the marginalised groups in the region. During my research, it became apparent that the Malis were not happy with the logic presented by the Maratha members of the PLA. One influential Mali PLA member, Sharad Vidayate, who is also a member of the NCP, said that he would not give up his opportunity to be President. Vidayate was also a strong candidate against Dada in the Zilla Parishad Elections of 2012.

Caste politics also influence the distribution of irrigation water in the command area. This becomes evident when we explore the ongoing conflict between Parvati in Rampur village and Saraswati in Shyampur. It is the responsibility of Parvati WUA to transfer water from the outlet to the Saraswati WUA, but there are regular conflicts about the transfer and sharing of water. The farmers in Saraswati complain that the Parvati do not allow them to withdraw the required amount of water they need to water their crops. The Parvati deny these charges and accuse members of the Saraswati of using water irresponsibly. Both these associations regularly fight with each other during water rotations, and sometimes employees from the Irrigation Department have to intervene to resolve differences. These conflicts are often

discussed during meetings of the Managing Committee, where the representative of Saraswati often accuses the PLA of bias towards the Parvati when water is allocated. Furthermore, during these meetings it is common for Bajirao to speak in favour of the Parvati, and this gives Parvati the edge over the Saraswati WUAs. I believe that Bajirao is motivated by a variety of concerns- including village pride, but also to safeguard the interests of his family members, who own land in the command area of Parvati. Also, Dada strives to maintain the domination of the Maratha in the PLA, and he provides little or no space for the Mali farmers from the Saraswati to exercise any political power.

In spite of the claim that the PLA operates democratically, it continues the tradition of nominating its favoured candidates for important posts in the organisation, and it is unlikely that lower caste members are nominated, unless this is required by law. The twelve members of the Managing Committee must unanimously select a candidate as the President and Vice President of the PLA, but when they are challenged to deviate from tradition, they are reluctant to do so in case this ‘spoils the atmosphere of the PLA.’

Bajirao appoints all the staff members at the PLA and the process of recruitment to the PLA is very informal. Ultimately, it is Bajirao and Bharat Mawale who decide whom to recruit onto the staff of the PLA. This privilege has been put to use by Bajirao in order to enhance his popularity among his supporters. Bajirao recruits ‘his own men,’ such as Shankar (the driver of the PLA) and More and Prashant (Canal Inspectors) into the PLA. Furthermore, I observed that Dada uses the available infrastructure of the PLA, including computer facilities, the internet, and printing for his own benefit. Also, I observed that during the election period, the driver Shankar regularly helped the Secretary of the PLA to print pamphlets or select photos using the computer at the PLA office. Similarly, Bajirao’s practice of recruiting people from the nearby villages can also be interpreted as a strategy used to gain popularity in the other villages. Therefore, Bajirao uses his various roles in village life and the resources at the PLA to promote his own personal agenda in local politics.

In a way, these incidents show that a nexus exists between the bureaucracy, the elite farmers and NGOs, and these bodies work together to stifle information leaking about arguments between farmers, in order to promote the good image of the project. The perception of the good image of the project helps the bureaucracy to promote a story of success about the policy. For elite farmers- such as Bajirao and others- this is a new avenue used to enhance their power and popularity among the farmers. When observing the NGO, I found that, although they wanted to bring about change and challenge the existing power structures, they are unable to perform the role expected of them in the village, owing to financial constraints. Therefore, they prefer to work with the existing system and operate ‘public-service contractors’ to implement policy, rather than as a medium to bring about social and political change. As pointed out by Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin (2007) in their study of NGOs in Latin America and Africa, “NGOs become framed as public-service contractors, with donor interest in funding more innovative activities – including those oriented towards systematic alternatives and challenging hegemonic ideas – concomitantly reduced.” (Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2007, p.6)

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has made an attempt to understand the role of the Irrigation Department and the NGOs in the process of the implementation of the policy of WUAs. I found that government bureaucracy performed its role as a facilitator of the policy in how it introduced farmers to the idea of WUAs, and encouraged farmers to set them up in their villages. Government initiatives also provided training to some farmers to assist them in carrying out managerial tasks, such as record keeping, the measurement of water, and the distribution of the water etc. In a way, the Irrigation Department helped to educate farmers into being ‘rational consumers’ who would strive to achieve the goal of the efficient management and use of water. In this process, the state gains ultimate authority to regulate the process of the implementation of the policy in order to safeguard its interest in maintaining the good image of the project.

As noted by Foucault, the process of neo-liberalisation is not about the withdrawal of the state, but about enforcing the power of the state in terms of legal reforms and organising activities to create conducive conditions for the implementation of capitalistic development. As noted by Stiglitz (2008), this process of development is not a hurdle but a necessity for the markets, in terms of providing infrastructure and making education available to make the people aware of the programme. The evidence shows that the approach adopted by the state is a top-down approach, and not bottom-up approach. The Irrigation Department have played a central role in implementing the policy. As pointed by Malsare, the policy would be a real success if only all farmers were given the opportunity to contribute to the equitable distribution of water. Instead, the Irrigation Department continues to play a crucial role in the management of water and the maintenance of the canal. This is evident from the experiences of Suryakant Gorey. Also, it was seen that, even after management had been transferred over to the WUAs, the farmers were not able to arrive at a consensus about the process of the distribution of water. This lack of consensus and co-operation among the farmers continues in the region. Thirdly, I found that the Irrigation Department acts as if they are not accountable in their relationship to the WUAs. This was shown in the issue of the renovation of the canal in the area. The Irrigation Department had a responsibility to repair all the leaks, as noted by the joint supervision committee consisting of WUA members. However, the Department was not able to fulfil its responsibility. Furthermore, the representative of the Irrigation Department continues to postpone repairs, making excuses such as the unavailability of a contractor. The irresponsible behaviour of the Irrigation Department creates a barrier to the proper supply of irrigation water to the WUAs. It shows that the claim made by the WUAs about the policy of empowerment of the farmers, and co-operation between the farmers and the Irrigation Department, is not true. The Department continues to overlook the demands of the farmers, and appears not to be accountable to the WUAs.

These examples explore the nexus between the bureaucracy, the NGOs and the elite farmers. In relation to the role of the NGOs in the larger vision of alternative development, my findings show a not entirely pessimistic scenario,

but the presence of an opportunity for NGOs to find new ways of reclaiming their position as a medium of social and political change. I found that, in the process of implementation of the WUAs policy, the NGOs play a functional role- similar to the state. The NGOs seem concerned more about implementing a project than about engaging with change or transformation. This is similar to what Dagnino (2007) has observed about the role of NGOs in an era of neo-liberalism. He says that “neo-liberalism, takes the core concepts of alternative development and transforms them into ideas that help sustain the neo-liberal project. In the process, the role played by the NGOs is merely functional, and almost the same as the one carried out by the state. In this changed scenario, some of the NGOs might be worried about the conditions, and their responsibilities, but the question remains that are NGOs capable of challenging the conditions, to talk about the alternative societal projects. In fact, they tend to become more distant from the societal movements with which they were previously more organically linked.” (Dagnino, 2007, p.12)

I believe that one of the reasons for the inability of the NGOs to talk about social and political change lies in the culture of reciprocity, a principle that defines the organisation of NGOs. As noted by Thomas (2007) DFID funding channels resources to the NGOs, but this may be jeopardising one of the most important contributions made by NGOs, which is to promote an alternative form of relating within a modern capitalist society, that accommodates a large bureaucratic state sector. In this process, the NGOs merely become another private firm who must compete for donor contracts on the basis of efficiency and impact. This invariably leads to NGOs having to compromise their principles. Concepts such as solidarity, the quality of personal relationships, partnerships with local and national government agencies, the contribution of participatory service provisions to the broader processes of empowerment, and advocacy for all forms of ‘public action’ that contest ideas about what constitutes public action and provision are somewhat lost in the compromise that has to be made. Thomas (2007) argues that the NGOs’ tendency to act on the principle of reciprocity has reduced their power, because there is a need to withhold the demonstration of values as a result of pressure from the donor.

I found that NGOs are dependent on the state for their next project, and on the elite of the village to achieve results in terms of the success of their project. This takes away their potential to be politically strident, and to work for the ideals of social and political change they are meant to be championing. In a way, the role of the state and the NGOs does not help to realise the empowerment of farmers. The implementation of the procedures of the WUA, the Irrigation Department, and NGO bureaucracy do not take into account the potential for caste or class discrimination. Although caste and class discrimination problems are well-known in India, and are the subject of much debate, there is an absence of the recognition of these problems by the main players in the implementation process. However, the reason for this might be due to a desire among management to maintain an apolitical discourse, in order to avoid inflaming potential conflicts among different stakeholders. On the other hand, the lack of discourse or recognition of the problem might be connected with a reluctance to address or understand the local realities of fragmented relationships and the complications of caste among the poor and weaker sections of the community. The bureaucracy and NGO do not seem to engage with ideas, but, rather, they overlook new ideas in order not to divert themselves from the target of achieving success.

Chapter- 5

The Formation and Functioning of Water Users Associations I: Parvati Water Users Association

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the process of the formation and the functioning of the Parvati WUA, in Rampur. I argue that the policy of equal participation as promoted by the WUAs appears to be only true ‘on paper’, and that the practices of water distribution and management at Parvati WUA is devoid of any meaningful participation on the part of women and non-dominant castes. In other words, as pointed out by some of the critics of decentralization and participation, that in the presence of patriarchal values and caste inequalities the participation, fails to achieve the desired objective of the empowerment of women and marginalised sections of the society (Jayal, 2006).

This chapter presents evidence in the form of observations and interviews carried out during water rotation periods from December 2011 to April 2012. These observations and interviews took place with farmers, and at meetings of the WUA. The chapter explores the extent to which WUA policy facilitates the empowerment of small landholding farmers, and whether they are realising meaningful participation in the WUA. I will engage with feminist literature that critically looks at the participation and examines the neo-liberal project, not only as a ‘class project’, but as a project that practices different forms of social inequalities against gender, caste, religion, and race. This literature explores neo-liberalism as something that favours the interests of the elite in the society (Fraser, 2012, Duggan, 2003).

This chapter is divided into sections, which will cover: the formation process of the Parvati WUA (5.2), followed by a discussion on the membership committee structure of the WUA in terms of caste and class (5.3). The next section will examine the functions carried out by this particular WUA (5.4), then explore the way WUAs encourage the increase in water charges in the

area, thereby depriving the small and poor farmers of their due share of water (5.5). Section (5.6) looks at the forms of participation among non-dominant caste members. Section (5.7) analyses the role of women's participation in the WUA. Finally, the conclusion summarises the findings of the chapter (5.8).

5.2 The Formation of the Parvati WUA

In this section, I will relate two different stories narrated by the two founding members of the WUAs. I will compare these stories with the official story of the formation of WUAs as told by the Irrigation Department and the NGO. I will try to highlight similarities and differences in the stories to get a better understanding of the formation process. The intention is to verify the official story, and to compare differences between the two stories told.

Parvati stands for the name of goddesses. The Parvati WUA was formed in 1993 using the Co-operative Society Act of 1960. In 2006, the Association was reconstituted under the Maharashtra Management of Irrigation Systems by Farmers Act 2005 (MMISF Act-2005)ⁱ. Parvati WUA is the second biggest WUA in the command area of the Mahabalipur Dam (the biggest is the Dr Babsaheb Ambedkar WUA). The Association's command area covers 1,103 hectares, and its membership comprises approximately 1,500 to 2,000 farmers; these membership figures have been estimated under the terms of the MMISF Act 2005, which gives membership to all families who have registered their land. (For a map of the Parvati WUA command area, refer to Appendix Four.)

The Association receives water through four major outlets that are connected to the main canal of the Mahabalipur Dam. These four outlets are: DO (Distributor Outlet), Sub-minor 1, Sub-minor 2 and Sub-minor 4. Sub-minor 3 is connected to the main canal in the command area of the Parvati WUA, but it supplies water to the farmers of the Saraswati WUA in Ozar. Both these Associations experience regular conflicts among members about the distribution of water in the area. The area covered by DY is large, compared to the other sub-minors in the command area. The number of outlets for all Associations in the area is around 13, and all the outlets are usually named after the communities who use them for water.

The command area of the Association is substantial, and farmers cultivate different crops, including seasonal and cash crops. During the summer season (after the harvest of wheat in the months of February and March) the land is kept free by the farmers owing to a lack of water. Most of the farmers in the DY command area are small-to-medium landholding farmers who cultivate different crops. There are a small number of medium-sized farms of about twenty to forty acres, and these farms cultivate grapes, and there are two large farms of around seventy to one hundred acres. The topography of DY is very uneven, because it is such a large area. The land in the upper stream comprises red soil, and this has less capacity to absorb water. On the lower side, there is black soil, which absorbs more water.

According to the Irrigation Department and the local NGO, SPK, the WUAs in the area were formed as a result of the collective efforts of farmers, the Irrigation Department and the local NGO, SPK. Following the success of WUAs in the OzarTaluka area, farmers in adjoining areas (including Parvati) decided to join the WUA movement. On hearing the stories as told by two founding members of the WUAs, I decided that I wanted to verify their stories, and note down any differences in their narrations.

In Rampur, Baburao Pawar and Lahunu Phule led the formation of their Associations. These men are now in their eighties, and have retired from working with the WUAs. Lahunu Phule is a small landholding farmer who belongs to the Mali caste. According to him, one of his relatives, who worked at the Irrigation Department, approached him to form the Association in the village. The officer from the Irrigation Department gave him an information leaflet about WUAs and explained the benefits of forming a WUA. Phule took the information leaflet and distributed it among the farmers. His story goes that, within an hour, he had gathered together around 100 farmers, and he held a meeting to tell them about the benefits of setting up a WUA.

Lahunu Phule is illiterate, and so he recruited Babu Jayaram, from the Maratha caste, to accompany him on his visits to the farmers. In due course, he met Bhausaheb Upadhey (the founder of the local NGO, SPK) at Ozar, who gave him more information about WUAs. Upadhey acted as a sort of ‘guru’ to

Phule, and he taught Phule about the benefits of WUAs for the development of agriculture in particular. Phule told me that Bapusaheb and Balaji Mawale (the current President of the local NGO, SPK) were invaluable helpers in the implementation of the scheme. Phule said that, after his visits to Uphadey, “I felt that we needed a society, because sometimes there used to be a delay in the water supply from the Irrigation Department, which caused confusion and disruption among the farmers.” (Interview with Lahanu Phule, a small farmer, in Rampur, June, 2012.)

Phule told me that during the initial years of trying to form the WUA, it was hard work, but he persuaded local farmers to join in by emphasising that the project was far more than a *srakarchpilu* (a ‘baby of government’), and that it would be of great benefit to the farmers. He explained that they would organise farmers’ meetings, and read out the benefits of WUAs. Also, a letter from the Irrigation Department assisted him in his task of persuasion. The letter said “We should not be illiterate and should form our own society. The water allotted to you is *haqqachpani* (which means ‘rightful water’). Once you get control over the water you can use it anytime.”

Phule said that, during these initial months, the organisers had to be patient and accommodating of the needs and demands of the different farmers, in order to avoid arguments and conflicts that could cause delays. The WUA staff had to use soft language in order to persuade some farmers to allow the circulation of water to other farmers in the area. He told me that in the first months after the Association was formed, “water used to be abundant, so farmers used to fill up two acres, but say they had only filled one acre. We had to keep a watch on the farmers during the rotation period, and we had to be patient and listen to them most of the time.”

Phule said that, in the beginning, staff at the WUA tried hard to avoid using strict regulations, and to avoid any conflict breaking out between the WUA and the farmers, because there was a fear that this might discourage farmers from joining the WUA. However, Phule reiterated that this did not mean that some farmers were deprived of their right to an adequate amount of water. Phule said that, in spite of these difficulties, he would ensure that every farmer

received their share of water; he said there were no complaints from farmers about the WUA being unable to deliver an adequate amount of water to the farmers. He also reiterated that, during his tenure, there was transparency and accountability in terms of the financial management of the WUA. When I asked him about the role of the Irrigation Department, he said that staff at the Irrigation Department would visit him; they would help him run the Association, and he received regular monthly visits from two irrigation officers.

When I asked about conflict and differences among the farmers, Phule said that there were conflicts, especially among farmers based in the ‘head’ region of the canal. These farmers mostly belong to the Maratha caste, and they were not ready to co-operate with the WUA, and so caused delays and disruption in the process of the distribution of water among the farmers. However, eventually, by continuously engaging with them, they began to work with the WUA. Phule worked with the WUA for ten years, and he knows a great deal about how people use water, and how people misuse it and hide it.

Parvati is one of the biggest WUAs in the area, and it covers a large land mass in the project command area. I found that, often, the staff at the Association and its Managing Committee claim they are managing the Association efficiently, in spite of its large coverage area. When I asked Phule about the size of the coverage area for Parvati, he explained that it was Balaji (an NGO member) who wanted the Association to cover a large area. Phule said, “Balaji told us that the bigger the area then, the more profit there is, because if there are ten farmers then water will run down for ten days, but if there is only one farmer then water will run for only one day.” (Interview with Lahanu Phule, a small farmer, in Rampurin June, 2012.) In the early days, Balaji would always praise Phule for his efforts in the formation and functioning of the Associations, but Phule recalls how, over time, the committee members began to lose interest, and there was a lack of order in the functioning of the Association. Phule said that it was at this point that Balaji intervened to select new committee members.

It seems that Phule was not satisfied with the new managing body, or with the direction in which the organisation was heading. He told me that after years of hard work, the larger landholding farmers eventually decided to join the Association, and immediately began to take over the running of the Association. Phule explains that, “When it was time to write down the names of the members who had contributed to establishing the WUA, on the official board displayed on the outer wall of the office of the WUA, it was the big farmers who were named at the top of the list. These people just care about prestige and nothing else.” (Interview with Lahanu Phule, a small farmer, in Rampur in June 2012.) It seems that Phule was unhappy because those who he felt had contributed the most in the early days of the Association were placed below the higher-ranking farmers who had only just joined the Association. He went on to say that “People should not be crazy for prestige.” Phule said that his name appeared as low-down as sixth on the list. Phule was unhappy that his work had not received due recognition by his fellow members of the WUA, and when I asked him about the future of the Association, he showed little interest. He told me that he had stopped visiting the offices of the Association, and that now he preferred to spend time in the temple at his farmhouse, or in the Gopal Krishna temple in the village. The interview ended on this rather sad note. Phule’s experience highlights how the small and medium landholding farmers can be marginalised in the village by the larger landholding and more influential farmers.

Additionally, I interviewed the other founding member of the Association, Baburao Pawar. Baburao Pawar is a medium size land-owning farmer who belongs to the dominant Pawar family in the village. He is regarded as influential among the villagers, and before he retired, he exercised strong influence among the small farmers in the village. Pawar has a strong moral conviction about working in public life, which is motivated by his desire to work for the welfare of other people. He is regarded as an upstanding member of the village with high moral ethics, and this aspect of his personality came out strongly when I interviewed him. The story of the formation of the Parvati WUA as told by Jadhav, who is popularly known as ‘Baba’, was different from the story told by Phule.

According to Baba, before the formation of the WUA, farmers in the Ozar area would take as much water as they desired, and irrigation officers would not attempt to stop them. Baba explained that, “The leaders of our village, Mr Sainath Pawar and Babasaheb Patil, were not able to think on it. So then I decided that this water should be lifted up from Ten Miles, and used for farming.”(Interview with Baba Pawar, a medium farmer, in Rampur in June 2012.) Ten Miles is the name of a place situated between Ozar and the Rampur village. Baba said that it was at Ten Miles where he met other farmers who told him they had paid for their water. Baba explained that these farmers said they knew members on the Board of the Irrigation Department, and they asked Baba to meet with them to try to find out how things could be organised so they could receive a better share of water. Baba said that then, he visited the Irrigation Department, and he was welcomed by officers who assured him they would support the farmers.

The irrigation officers provided Baba with a receipt book for collecting registration charges from the farmers who wanted to be members of the Association. The registration fees at that time were Rs 115 for an individual farmer. In order to collect these charges, Baba said that, at first, he gave the receipt book to the members of the dominant Patil family, and he asked them to collect the water charges. However, he said that the Patil were not able to register most of the farmers in the area, especially those living in Rajwada (Rajwada is a lower-caste area and where the Dalits (untouchables) reside). Therefore, Baba took on this responsibility himself, and started to collect money from the farmers at Rajwada. Baba also said that because these farmers trusted him, they did not need “any receipt” for their payments. Also, Baba said that the farmers in Rajwada trusted him, but did not trust the Patil family! Baba said that after this, all the farmers in the area became members of the WUA.

However, Baba went on to explain that, even though he had won the trust of the villagers, the irrigation officers told him that it would not be possible to form an Association in the area, because of legal issues surrounding the construction of bridges by the farmers. Baba said that he challenged the

officers, saying, “If we do not form an Association now, then the farmers will blame me and beat me up.” Baba said that then the irrigation officers asked him to sign various documents, and he submitted his signature on as many as ‘56 different documents’ (interview with Baba Pawar, a medium farmer, in Rampurin June 2012); this is not the actual number of documents signed, but is a Marathi expression meaning ‘a lot of paper work’. After this, Baba carried out the registration process in the village. The next important issue for Baba was the collection of water charges. The irrigation officers asked Baba how he would collect the water charges, especially from his own relatives. One officer confessed that it was often hard to recover water charges from farmers, and Baba admitted that it was a difficult aspect of his job at first. He told the Department that he would only be able to collect the charges with their help and support.

Following the initial registration, in the early years of formation, the Association faced difficulties distributing water among the farmers. Baba said that one incident involved a farmer known as Amruta Pawar. Amruta was well known in the village and notorious. He would regularly kill snakes and many were scared of him. Once, during a rotation, a group of people called on Baba in the middle of the night complaining that somebody had broken the lock of the water outlet along the weir. Baba went to the site with the farmers and saw that the lock was broken. There were a group of farmers guarding the outlet, and Amruta was also there. Baba asked the farmers who had broken the lock, and they replied Amruta Jadhav; the farmers claimed that Amruta had broken the lock to get water for this sugar cane crop. When Baba tried to lock the outlet, he was stopped by Amruta and a few other farmers. Baba had expected some of the Patil farmers to help him, but none of them offered to help. In the end, the police arrived and took charge of the situation. When Baba insisted that Amruta be punished, the police were not interested. The police said to Baba, “Baba, these people are from your village; tomorrow you might decide to retract your complaint, and this would insult us.” However, Baba told the police that he would sign a statement to say that he would not do this. It was only after this assurance that the police arrested Amruta and took him to jail. However, it was not long before he was released on bail, and as soon as he

was released Amruta threatened to kill Baba, to which Baba replied, “It would give me great glory to die for water. It would be good to die whilst trying to serve other people and distribute water.” The case went on for five years, and eventually Amruta was punished and had to pay a fine. Baba said that when Amruta’s son became a lawyer, he visited Baba to ask for forgiveness on behalf of his father, and asked Baba to drop the case, and Baba did.

Baba also told another story about a farmer called Kamble, who belonged to a lower-caste Dalit family. One day, Kamble came to Baba to complain about the irregular supply of water. Kamble told Baba that some of the farmers who lived near him would not allow him or his family to take water. Furthermore, the *bhil* people (tribal people living in the area) asked Baba not to get involved in the matter, and to allow the local people resolve their matter on their own. The Bhil warned Baba that the Dalits could not be trusted. However, Baba neglected the advice of the Bhil people and went ahead with a visit to Kamble’s farm, in order to dig a field channel. The Pawar family did not like this, but they didn’t prevent Baba from digging the channel.

According to Baba, these incidents helped him to become recognised and trusted among the officers of the Irrigation Department, and Baba said that senior officers from the Department visited him to thank him for his work in the Association. Later he was awarded a certificate for his distinguished work in the area by the Irrigation Department. Baba became Chairman of the Association in the initial years of 1993 – 1994, and during his tenure he would personally carry out the task of opening the outlet locks, and distributing the water. Also, he would regularly accompany the Secretary and the Patkari to the rotations during the rotation period, even when irrigation officers told him that he should avoid doing this. However, Baba insisted on going, and justified his presence by saying that it was “his duty to see that everyone gets the water.” When the Patkari was caught illegally selling water to a farmer in another nearby village, Baba punished the staff member and warned him that next time, if he were found guilty, he would be removed from his job.

Baba proudly told me that, during his tenure, the Association received a donation of one and a half lakh rupees (£1,500), which was used to build

offices. Baba was keen to reiterate that, during the construction of the building, he tried to ensure that no financial corruption occurred. Baba gained the support of the majority of the community, and when some members called for his resignation, they were not successful. According to Baba, a Dalit once asked for his resignation from the post of Chairman, and Baba asked this member to set up a petition in order to obtain signature of support, but no signatures could be obtained and so the demand for resignation was withdrawn. Eventually, however, he did resign, after continued pressure from other members.

Baba explained to me that he felt he was pressured into resignation due to his honesty, and that some of the bigger farmers desired to run the WUA in their favour. Baba explained that, even after he resigned, he continued to try to ensure that the WUA was corruption-free by making regular visits to the office, and asking the staff about how the WUA was run. Over time, Baba discovered, at least, one instance of financial mismanagement, but this happened around one and a half years after his resignation. A bank employee advised Baba that the bank account of the WUA ‘had been eaten up by rats’ (this is a euphemism for the illegal use of money and corruption at the bank). Baba raised the issue at a general meeting of the WUA and asked the Managing Committee members to present the accounts of the WUA, and to explain any gaps. Baba said that the Managing Committee could not give a satisfactory answer to his request, and many of the members remained silent about the matter.

Baba later pursued the matter with a senior officer at the Irrigation Department, who told the committee members to submit a response as soon as possible, but, later, the Department gave up chasing the matter. When I asked Baba why he had not pursued things further, he said that “My own nephew was then Chairman, and was involved in it, so I gave up the issue.” (Interview with Baba Pawar, a medium farmer, in Rampur, June 2012.) Baba also claims that the Association stopped taking his suggestions into consideration—suggestions such as improving the roads and the plantations along the canal to stop the erosion of soil, etc. Eventually, Baba stopped going to the Association

due to what he says was the rise in corruption among the members of the Association. His son-in-law, who lives in the village, later confirmed that eventually, owing to this corruption at the society, Baba did indeed stop going to any Association meetings and gatherings. Baba has now moved out of the village to live in Nashik with his daughter and son in the city. The leadership of the Association passed to Baba's nephew and, to date, it continues to be enjoyed by the members of the Pawar family. The current Chairman of the Parvati WUA is from the Pawar family.

After interviewing the two 'founders' of the WUA, I decided to explore how the farmers experienced the formation of the WUA. However, very few farmers recalled anything about the formation process and neither did they remember anything significant about the inauguration event. Many knew of the two main 'founders' but did not know any specific details about how the WUA was set up. The young farmers in their thirties could name the village elders who took the initiative to form the Association, but did not offer any other information apart from this. One farmer, Suresh Kamble, told me that the initial registration fee was so great that very few farmers from Rajwad actually registered as members of the Association to start with. Suresh decided to share the charges of registration with his brother, but registered his name as the member of the Association.

Most of the farmers I questioned did not know about the formation of the WUA, or they would divert the discussion onto other things, and so eventually I gave up asking them about this subject, unless there was an appropriate or relevant moment to do so. When the MMISF Act 2005 was passed, all the farmers in the command area became the members of the Association. Suresh said that, "In general, the farmers know that it is 'big people' in the village who take the initiative and organise events in the village. The 'big people' have their own self-interest in mind, as they want to gain popularity with the organisers, and to be members of this or that committee in the village. It is sheer political interest that motivates the big people to take part in such public events." (Interview with Suresh Kamble, small farmer, Rampur, July, 2012.)

5.2.1 Similarities and Dissimilarities in the Stories of the Formation of the WUA

The above-related stories and experiences reveal how WUA policy implementation took shape in reality. I found that, in spite of the differences between stories, both share some similarities with the officially published version of the story of the formation of the WUAs. These similarities and differences are discussed below:

I found that both stories confirmed the official version of formation, with some differences stated in terms of the roles played by the individuals. Both stories show that the WUAs were not the initiative of farmers, but a process guided by the Irrigation Department. The NGO helped out in the initial years, and they helped to resolve differences among the farmers at the WUA.

I found that Lahanu Phule's story was more coherent, and matched more closely with the official version of the story. Baba Pawar's story identified the role of the Irrigation Department, but was more of a personal glorification of his own role in the process. Baba Pawar's story makes the Irrigation Department look as if they were merely an agency that helped out with the implementation process, but in Phule's story, the Irrigation Department plays a crucial role in terms of providing the idea, as well as in guiding the farmers. In Phule's story, the letter handed out by the Irrigation Department was the key to gaining confidence and trust in the WUAs among the farmers.

Other similarities between the stories included:

- a) revelations of the struggles carried out by the founding members in the initial years to convince the farmers to become members of the WUAs
- b) Attempts made resolve differences among farmers and maintain harmony among the WUA members.
- c) Attempts made to pursue the collection of water charges etc.

It appears that the founding members had to use every possible strategy to pursue members to help in the functioning of the WUAs. Both stories confirmed that the Irrigation Department helped them out in the process.

Furthermore, both stories relate the concern expressed by smaller farmers about the growing influence of the large landowning farmers in the WUAs, and the issue of corruption. I found that both stories revealed that the WUAs have promoted the role of large landowning and elite farmers in the village. Both stories mentioned the issue of growing corruption in the WUAs, although it remains unknown whether both farmers had any real power or capability to address it, or even the urge to eradicate it.

Both farmers glorified their role in the process of the implementation of the policy. Both farmers explicitly talked about their own role in the process, and how they individually influenced the process. Phule claimed he was able to gather a crowd of a hundred farmers together in just one day, and Pawar said that his stature in the village ensured the support and trust of the farmers. This showed that the individuals placed an important value on their own personal influence, rather than on the collective initiative that is promoted by WUA policy. Phule did mention the assistance of Baba in helping to keep records, but Pawar did not really detail the role played by Lahanu Phule in the process of the formation of WUAs (as well as in their functioning).

Therefore, overall, the main differences in the story centred around the extent to which the farmers described their own personal involvement and influence on the project. These claims may relate in some way to their own personalities, but also their caste and class positions in the village. Baba Pawar's story explicitly stated the role of caste domination in the village. Baba Pawar is a member of the dominant family, and this family have used the WUAs as means of exercising and enhancing their influence in the village. It was clear from his initial remark that he felt that the previous leadership was ineffective in improving the farmers' access to water. Similarly, he claimed that his personal position in the village was responsible for gaining the support for the WUAs in relation to the Patil family, and this illustrated the grudge between these families in the village.

One difference in the stories relates to how each teller interpreted the issue of corruption and the large landholding farmers; and how it is connected to dissatisfaction about WUAs. I found that Lahanu Phule expressed more dissatisfaction than Baba Jadhav. One obvious reason for this difference is that Phule belongs to a non-dominant Mali caste, while Pawar belongs to the dominant Maratha caste in the village. Phule was concerned not only with the growing dominance of a particular class of farmers, but also a particular caste in the village. The growing influence of Maratha farmers in the WUAs will potentially marginalise other non-dominant caste members in the associations. This risk was evident when Phule talked about how his name had been pushed down the list of those involved in the important initial stages of setting up the WUA. Phule felt that his contribution had been negated, and the assistance of the upper-caste members had been promoted beyond the value they actually had contributed.

When I interviewed Baba Pawar, I questioned the sincerity of his response about corruption in the village. Pawar overlooked a case of corruption involving a family member. It was admirable that Pawar accepted the fault, but this incident demonstrated how corruption works in the village and how family relationships are played out. Pawar was forced to go against his family members in the case of Amruta Pawar, and this event was made public. However, in the case of his nephew, he took an altogether different position. I believe that the different stances taken by Baba Pawar related more to the circumstances of each incident; in one instance it was impossible to hide the event of corruption from the public. Amruta's case was difficult to overlook because it was observed by many other farmers, but the case of his nephew was easier to overlook because it did not involve other farmers knowing much about it. This lack of transparency leaves no space for small stakeholders to demand accountability to ensure the proper functioning of the Association. Therefore, to avoid damage to the family's public image, the issue is overlooked by family members, in the interest of the family.

The medium and smaller landholding farmers in the village associated the formation of WUAs as just another way that the dominant caste farmers in the

village could exercise their control. The small stakeholder farmers were least interested in the process of formation, and did not care if they were less informed about it. This demonstrated that the process of implementation of the policy is a top-down process, where the irrigation bureaucracy provided guidelines to the farmers, helped them, and taught and trained farmers, using local NGOs to implement the policy. Also, by ensuring large landholding farmers obtained key posts- such as President of the WUA- the domination of caste continued to exercise its influence in the village. The domination of upper-caste farmers becomes more evident when we look at the structure of Parvati WUA.

5.3 The Structure of Parvati WUA

The WUA consists of a Managing Committee (MC) of nine members: three each from the head, middle and tail area of the command area. The Managing Committee of the WUA is supposed to represent all farmers belonging to every caste group in the village. At the time of writing, the Chairman of the Association is a female member, Kusumbai Pawar, who is a member of the influential Pawar family (who belong to the important Maratha caste). Other important members of the Managing Committee are Sudham Tatya (a former Chairman and now Vice Chairman), Shrirama Tatya (a former Chairman and now a Member of the Committee), Shivaji Patil (a former Chairman and now a Member of the Committee), Lohat (a Member of the Committee), and Muna Patil (whose mother used to be Chairman of the Managing Committee). The Managing Committee includes two other women apart from the Chairman; they are Hausabai, who belongs to a tribal group, and Shobha Patil, who belongs to the dominant Maratha family. These are the only women members that one usually sees at the WUA office, and who participate in the functioning of the WUA. Two members of the managing committee come from lower caste groups: Ramesh Lohat and Subhas Kamble. The committee has also appointed a farmer from the Shepherd community to the managing committee.

Image 6: The Managing Committee and Staff at Parvati WUA



The employees at the Association comprise farmers from the command area. Sanjeev Pawar is the Secretary, and Santosh Pawar is the Clerk at the office. They are both in their forties, and are cousins belonging to the dominant Pawar Maratha family in the village. Sanjeev Pawar is a medium-sized land owner in the command area of Parvati, and he cultivates different crops, such as sugar cane, grapes, wheat, etc. Santosh is a small farmer who lives with his brother in their traditional house. After cultivating *satavari* (asparagus racemosus - a medicinal herb) for a few years, he is now planning to shift to the cultivation of grapes. He also runs a stationery shop near to the high school in the village. This is an additional source of income, and his wife helps him with running of the shop. Shantaram Kamble, a man in his fifties, is *Patakri* (the one who distributes the water among the farmers). He is a small farmer who owns around one and a half acres in the village, but he does not have water well. He belongs to the Dalit community. Shantaram Kamble mainly cultivates soybeans, wheat, and coriander, etc. He has four children: one daughter and three sons. All of his children are pursuing their education. He has been working at the Association for a long time - around six to eight years- and he knows the entire sub-minor area, and most of the farmers in the area. In a way, the managing committee at Parvati are an ‘ideal committee’ because, on paper, the committee seems to represent all farmers from different

castes and communities, as well as representing women. The following section will explore the representation of different caste groups and women in the structure of Parvati WUA.

5.4 The Functions of the WUA: Participation and Perception

Parvati WUA was set up to carry out three main functions: the distribution of water among the farmers, resolving conflicts among farmers, and collecting water charges from farmers. Other functions include acting as a centre to disperse information about different schemes, distributing fertilizers and other materials issued by the agricultural department, and the distribution of an annual report.

The WUA follows standard procedures for collecting information about the demand for water from individual farmers, and submitting this information to the Project Level Association, stating the required amount of water needed by the WUA in any given season. Unlike other associations that provide water on an hourly basis during summer, Parvati provides water based on 'areas of land' in both the Rabi as well as in the summer season.

During the process of the distribution of water, the WUA assists the PLA and the Irrigation Department in the command area. At the beginning of every Rabi season (i.e. in early October), the Managing Committee of the PLA reviews the available stock of water in the dam. Then, taking into consideration the demand for water from the associations, the PLA submits its requirements to the Irrigation Department. The water allotted by the Irrigation Department is then divided into five rotations by the committee. Of these five rotations, three are carried out during the Rabi season (i.e. October to January) and two are carried out during the summer season (i.e. from March to May). The available quota of water for every rotation is flexible, and can be increased or decreased by the committee of the PLA, after taking into consideration usage and the demand for water from the farmers. The quota for every WUA is determined on the basis of the land irrigated in the command area. The quotas were allotted almost a decade earlier, when the PLA was formed in 2003, on the basis of the land irrigated in the command area of the

WUA. The quota allotted to Parvati is one of the biggest quotas of water after that given to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's WUA in the area. The WUA has been receiving water on the basis of a quota allotted ten years ago. However, the PLA adopts a flexible approach if demand exceeds the prescribed amount of the water quota.

After the allotment process has taken place, the Managing Committee of the PLA, in consultation with the Managing Committee of the WUA, organises an event called *Jalpujan*, which is a 'worshipping of the water' and this event marks the beginning of the winter rotation. The ceremony is attended by the farmers and the senior officers of the Irrigation Department. The occasion of Jalpuja is also the time when senior officers of the Irrigation Department make themselves available to answer any questions raised by the members. During the water rotations, the employees of the WUA must monitor the sub-minor day and night. The employees at Parvati divide the area among themselves for convenience to monitor the area. The Clerk observes the upper stream area at DO, during the night, and the mid-stream area, during the daytime. The Patakri looks after the area at the tail-end of the DO, which is home to most of the smaller and medium landholding farmers. The Secretary hardly ever visits the canal area during the rotation period; his work is carried out by the Clerk of the WUA. This division of work among the staff makes it convenient for them to properly monitor the command area. However, this division of labour seems to have been allocated to serve the work interests of the WUA employees- mainly the Secretary and the Clerk, who have placed themselves in a position where they will not have to involve themselves in the conflicts that involve smaller and medium landholding farmers located in the tail-end of the area.

Another important function carried out by Parvati WUA is the collection of water charges. Prior to the formation of WUAs, the tariff system was used by the Irrigation Department, and it was the Irrigation Department that collected water charges from the farmers. The water charges paid by the farmers during irrigation times were in the range of Rs 75 to 100 for the winter season, and Rs 300 to 400 during the summer season. These charges were negligible for

farmers. Upon the formation of WUAs, the Association took charge of collecting water charges, and, in consultation with the PLA, they decide water rate charges by taking into consideration the expenditure incurred on maintaining their offices, employee wages, stationery used, etc. The current water charges are much higher than the water charges levied by the Irrigation Department prior to the change of system.

The Irrigation Department charges water to each WUA at a very low rate- i.e. Rs 75 per acre in the rabbi season (winter), and Rs 450 per acre in the summer season (Source: Annual Report of the PLA 2012-13). Comparatively, the charges levied by Parvati WUA to the farmers are Rs 450 per acre during the rabbis season and Rs 1500 during the summer season. The difference between rates levied by the Department and what the WUA charges are four times the original amount. Furthermore, there has been a steady increase in water charges since the formation of the WUAs, taking into consideration increases in expenditure for maintenance of the offices and the salary of employees.

Water charges are collected by the WUA either by going out to the farmer, or when a farmer comes to the office. At Parvati WUA, certain farmers prefer to come into the offices to pay their charges, and the Patkari goes out to collect the remaining charges from farmers in the area. When and where a farmer pays is a flexible process, set by each WUA. Therefore, farmers tend to pay the charges according to their preferences, either before the water rotation or after the water rotation. At Parvati, the farmers preferred to use both methods, depending on whether they had money available to pay in a certain period. However, the PLA ensures that water charges are collected regularly from the WUA and submitted to the Department before the due date. If a WUA is not able to submit its charges on the due date, the PLA can make an adjustment relating to payments made, but a fixed charge must be submitted well before the due date, in order to receive the benefits enumerated in the MMISF Act-2005. The Act states that, on the receipt of payment before the due date, the PLA is authorised to receive one third of its charges in return by the Irrigation Department. The incentive of this discount motivates the PLA to collect their charges from the WUAs before the due date, and to make various adjustments,

as mentioned above, if a WUA fails to meet the date of payment. In these cases, sometimes, big landholding farmers pay their charges, in the name of PLA, to the Irrigation Department. The PLA eventually returns this amount to the farmer when it receives its share from the Irrigation Department. Therefore, the PLA ensures that the farmers do not lose the benefits offered by the policy. In terms of collecting their water charges, Parvati WUA has been able to show steady progress, with a 93% recovery of total charges levied out (source: Annual Report of Parvati WUA 2011-12). The PLA achieved a 95% recovery of total charges for the year 2012-13 (source: Annual Report of the PLA 2012-13). This means that the WUAs and the PLA have been able to collect water charges regularly from the farmers, and the government has been able to receive almost up to 95% - 98% of the total water charges levied on farmers in the command area (source: Annual Report of PLA 2012-13).

5.5 WUAs and the Process of the Commodification of Water

The initial high rise in the price of water by WUAs was due to heavy investment made by the Associations in terms of organisation, salaries, canal maintenance, stationery, and other expenditures, etc. As a result, WUAs acquired stability in terms of meeting their expenditure, and the WUAs said that the cost of water would eventually be lower in order to meet the needs of all farmers. However, over a ten year period at Parvati, the price of water has not decreased- rather; it has increased steadily, since the formation of the WUAs. The reasons given by the WUA and the PLA for this steady rise in the price of the water is the general rise in inflation rates, which affect the employees' salaries. The issue of price rises has been taken up by an Evaluation Committee set up by farmers and the NGO working in the area.

The response of the NGO representative was that price rises are an issue that will eventually be resolved over time when WUAs acquire more stability in the command area (a discussion at the PLA Office in Rampur, attended by the Evaluation Committee that was sponsored by the Government of Maharashtra, in February 2012). However, the local NGO (SPK) representative, Balaji, was not clear about how long it would take for WUAs to achieve this stability. This is a major concern for farmers because WUAs are currently being given a

refund of 60 - 70% of total water charges collected by the PLA, along with other subsidies in terms of maintenance of the WUAs under the project of MWSIP-2003. In the case of withdrawal of this assistance by the government, and on the completion of the project period (which should have been completed by 2010, but has been given an extension of 5 years by the government) it will be difficult to calculate how WUAs will be able to manage their expenditure and reduce water charges at the same time.

The general impression one gets from the farmers' response to this situation is quite mixed, and there is not a clear consensus on the issue of water charges. The small farmers who cultivated wheat expressed their concern over the issue of increased water charges, because this would affect overall expenditure incurred on the production process. In order to arrive at this opinion, the farmers calculated their expenditure for the costs incurred on ploughing the land, seeds, fertilizers, water charges, labour, and charges paid for harvesting the crop etc. At the time of the study, the cost of all these elements had risen, and this was affecting the cost of production of their crops. For example, the farmers stated that the price of a urea bag was almost four times what it used to be five to six years previously. Furthermore, the annual income earned from a crop per hectare for wheat was less in comparison to other crops, such as grapes and flowers etc., and prices vary according to market.

The income earned from different crops per hectare in the command area is as follows: Rs 31,900 (around £319) for wheat, Rs 29,700 (around £297) for pulses, Rs 41,6000 (around £4,160) for grapes, Rs 46,2000 (around £4,620) for flowers (source: Annual Report of PLA 2012-13). For those farmers who cultivate wheat, the increasing price of water charges is an issue of concern when they take into account the increasing price of the processes in production. At the same time, a lack of availability of water during summer due to high water prices means these farmers have no alternative but to look for other work as agricultural labourers in the area. Having to work on other people's farms during in the summer affects the self-esteem of the small landholding farmers. However, those small and medium sized farmers who belong to higher and middle castes do not appear to be openly available for

agricultural labour, and, instead they go to work for close friends and family. Due to a lack of social capital, lower-caste farmers such as Dalits need to be openly available for work as agricultural labourers in the village. These farmers express the desire for cheaper water during summer so they can carry out other types of farming- such as cultivating fodder for animals, because this receives a high price during the summer when local milk is produced. This could be an alternative source of income.

For farmers who cultivate flowers and vegetables, the increase in prices is not as important an issue as it is for the farmers who cultivate wheat. For the Mali, who farm flowers, their main concern was the timely availability of water in the area: if water is provided on time, and in adequate amounts, then they can use it effectively to raise an appropriate income from flowers. Therefore, for these farmers, the timely availability of water is more important than the price of the water.

Water prices are less important for farmers who cultivate grapes, because they can achieve a high rate of return from their crops. These farmers express some concern about water charges, but not as regularly as other farmers. The concerns of the farmers who cultivate grapes are about the timely availability of the water, rather than the price of water. I found that, due to the high risks they face losing their fragile crops due to untimely access to water, some of the large landowning farmers have arranged alternative and private systems to access water, such as introducing lift irrigation and bore wells onto their farms.

To summarise, I found that the issue of the price of water becomes a concern for the farmers depending on their caste, class and landowning position in the village. There is no consensus about the effects of increases in the price of water among the farmers. The factor that is most relevant in opinions about water prices is the type of crop cultivated and the wealth of the individual farmer. I found that this situation is quite specific to the particular village and the region I studied, because it has a thriving market for grapes, flowers and vegetables. However, it became evident that the increase in the price of the water was not an isolated event, but an act in consonance with market reforms

that encourage the cultivation of cash crops and capitalistic development in the agricultural sector. The cultivation of grapes occupies 32.06% of the total land (in hectares) irrigated by the canal, followed by wheat at 21.91%, and then flowers 2.77% in the command area of PLA (source: Annual Report of PLA 2012-13). The land used to cultivate grapes has increased by to 30% to 40% since the formation of WUAs, and this is followed by a steady rise in land used to cultivate flowers in the area. Therefore, in some ways, farmers are influenced by the discourse about the scarcity of water, and consider water to be a valuable resource priced by the WUAs.

My study shows that the commodification of water provides an insight into the wider processes of neo-liberal run economies, which have reformed every sector accordingly to minimise complaints and labour-relations problems. The nature of this development has divided attitudes to water prices among the farmers along the lines of the different crops cultivated by the farmers.

The ability of some farmers to be able to pay higher charges for water has affected power relations among farmers in the WUA. I found that the WUAs provide a better service to farmers who cultivate grapes in comparison to those who cultivate wheat. I found that farmers cultivating wheat are treated as a liability by the WUAs. The WUA employees find it easier and more convenient to provide water to grape cultivators, and prefer not to deal with the cultivators of wheat, who lack money, and who express dissatisfaction with the amount of water they receive, and its price. Also, some wheat crops in the village are high-yielding varieties that consume more water compared to the old varieties. According to the cultivators of wheat, three rotations of water provided by the WUA are not adequate, and the farmers have to rely on well and bore water as a supplement. Also, the wheat cultivators complain about a delay in receiving water; wheat farmers usually need water around the end of September and the beginning of the month of October. However, the WUAs provide water at the end of October or at the beginning of the month of November, so when water is released by the WUAs in the first rotation, farmers try to appropriate as much water as possible for their standing crops.

Another effect of price rises for water can be seen in the extent of involvement and influence wheat cultivators have at the WUAs. The Parvati WUA Committee comprises mostly members who cultivate grapes, and the committee often excludes members belonging to the middle and lower caste groups who cultivate crops like wheat or vegetables. I found that this has an effect on the participation of different farmers in the functioning of the WUAs.

5.6 Participation and Perception

In this section, I will analyse the structure of the WUA managing committee, and the representation of different caste groups in the village. This will help to elucidate the meaning of ‘participation’ at Parvati WUA.

Those who attend the office and show their presence physically, such as the members of the Managing Committee, can be divided in two groups. The first group comprises ‘invisible members,’ or those who attend the office irregularly and only when needed or asked to by other members of the committee. Secondly, there are ‘visible members’, who frequently attend the office and participate in the events and meetings organised by the WUA on a regular basis.

Most members of the Managing Committee of the Association are essentially ‘invisible members’. These ‘invisible members’ become visible only during a visit by irrigation officers, or when there is conflict among the farmers. Sometimes, even when there is a conflict among farmers, or a visit by people from outside of the area, these ‘invisible members’ do not show themselves voluntarily; they are called on by the ‘visible members’ to demonstrate the unity and the strength of the Committee. These ‘invisible members’ include the Chairman of the Association, Kusumbai Pawar, Hausabai (the Adivasi tribe female member), Patilbai, Baburao Dephle, and Anil Kamble. During my entire time staying in the village, I only met Dephle at his farm, and prior to this I never saw him at a meeting or at the offices, even when there were visits from irrigation officers. Out of the twelve members of the committee, three are from a lower caste (the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes): Anil Kamble, Hausabai (who is from the Adivasi tribal community) and Lohat. All

are small landholders. In addition to farming, Anil Kamble has a small welding shop situated in the Panchayat building, whilst Lohat hires out his tractor to other farmers in the village; his son mostly looks after the tractor business.

The SC and ST members were only considered for the Committee owing to their good image in the village. Among them, it was only Lohat who visited the WUA offices regularly. He often travels on his bicycle to the offices in the morning to read the newspaper. He always has a smile on his face, and wears a black mark on his forehead (the black colour mark is a *tilak*, which is worn by Hindus to depict their caste). Lohat belongs to the Valmiki community (the scavenger community). He usually prefers to read the newspaper silently, and is hardly ever spoken to by the other members; no-one, apart from Shantaram and Sudham Tatya (the Vice Chairman), entertains him at the offices. Even during meetings, he hardly ever expresses his opinion, but he often smiles as a way of expressing agreement to another person's position or opinion. I observed the same kind of behaviour among the other non-dominant caste members and, particularly among the lower caste members.

Only one lower-caste member, Anil Kamble, expressed his opinions to the other committee members. One such occasion was at a meeting organised to resolve a conflict between two farmers about the construction of a field channel. Both farmers belonged to the dominant Pawar family, and were cousins. They both shared different opinions about whose land should be used to construct the field channel. It was during this discussion that Kamble said, "You Marathas always fight over a small piece of land. Why don't you give it up for the welfare of others?" Then he said, "You're so unlike our community (the Dalits), who are ready to give up a piece of land anytime to other family members. We are far better than you as we do not fight like you among ourselves." Sudham Tatya smiled at this, patted him on the back, and walked away with Anil Kamble. After this, I never saw Anil Kamble at any other meetings, apart from at the annual meeting attended by farmers and committee members, where he remained silent. At the same annual meeting I saw Dephele (who belongs to the shepherd caste), but he arrived late- almost at the

end- and then sat in the corner without making a comment. This was in spite of the controversy going on about the distribution of water among the two farmers.

Out of the ‘visible members’, Shriram Tatya, is an influential member in the Association. He has been an active member since the construction of the canal and the office buildings. Both Sudham and Shriram regularly attend when different guests and groups visit the Sangh or the Mahabalipur Dam in the area, and they tried to ensure that other members attended the meetings of the Association. They take a keen interest in the functioning of the Association, and in resolving differences among the farmers in the command area. In the absence of the Chairman (which happens at most monthly meetings), Shriram Tatya leads the discussion among the members. Both Sudham Tatya and Shriram Tatya belong to the dominant Maratha caste in the village. They are also strong supporters of Mr. Patil, belonging to the NCP party. According to the members, the Parvati WUA ‘belongs’ to the NCP party, even though all the Associations claim to be apolitical. Even so, many farmers identify certain Associations with a certain political allegiance. The Parvati Association is thought of as a stronghold of the Shiv Sena party in the village.

The ‘visible’ committee members would regularly visit the offices and take part vocally in meetings. However, most of the farmers would only visit at the beginning of the water rotation to pay their water charges. Indeed, some farmers preferred to pay their charges directly to the Secretary when he visited their farms to collect, or to the Patakari, who visit farms during and after the water rotation (this occurs mostly in the area of the DY, in the middle and lower regions). None of the small farmers visit the Associations without a specific purpose, and when they do it is usually to read a newspaper, or chat with other farmers.

I have used the terms ‘visible members’ and ‘invisible members’ to denote that not all members participate as fully as suggested by WUA policy. Members who participate less include women and non-dominant caste members. This shows the way caste and gender inequalities continue to shape the functioning of the WUA. Also, even among the ‘visible members’ it is

evident that not all members exercise their power equally in the process of decision making at the WUA. It was evident from the role played by Lohat and Kamble that their representation is merely physical, and their contribution does not amount to real power. On one level, it can be said that the new policy has given the opportunity for non-dominant caste members, especially the Dalits, to take part in the WUA, and lower caste members such as Kamble have been given the opportunity to express a voice in the WUA. This is a significant change, but it is valid to question the impact of these intentions on the decision-making process at the WUA. As noted at the annual meeting, described below, members of non-dominant castes barely participate in the decision making processes at the WUA. These processes are dominated by influential members who come from dominant caste groups in the village.

The Act does not say anything about the representation of the lower caste members in the WUA. The representation that lower-caste members have in the WUA, such as at Navanth, is because of their ‘good image’, as judged by the upper-caste members of the WUAs. This opinion was expressed in informal talks with Kamble at his welding shop in the village. Kamble told me that he has been able to maintain good relationships with other caste members in the village, and because of his good image among them he was asked by the other caste members in the WUA to be a member of the WUA. Looking at this entire scenario, it can be seen that, on the whole, the representation by non-dominant caste farmers is limited to a symbolic level, and these members are devoid of any real powers. The representation given to the non-dominant caste farmers in the WUA merely serves the purpose of making the WUA an ‘ideal type’, that appears to represent members from different caste groups in the command area.

5.7 Women’s Participation in the WUA

In this section, I will look at the way women participate in the functioning of the WUA committee and, in doing so I will refer to monthly meetings and the annual general body meeting organised by the WUA. The experience of women’s participation in the WUA has been generalised on the basis of four interviews carried out with three women members of the Parvati WUA

Managing Committee, and one interview with the Chairman of the Mahatma Jotirao Phule WUA in Shyampur Village.

In light of my observations about role of non-dominant caste members, the issue of women's active participation in the functioning of the Association needs to be reviewed. The MMISF Act 2005 makes it compulsory for the WUA committee to have one third of its members represented by women. Secondly, the Act makes it compulsory for a WUA committee to have a woman as Chairman of the WUA for two years, out of a term of six years.

Even though women were appointed on the Committee, I never saw any woman member or committee member visit the office during office hours, except to attend scheduled meetings. Furthermore, the three female members of the Managing Committee, who included Kusumbai, Shankar Pawar (the Chairman), and Hausabai Sonaji Gavit and Shobha Sanjay Patil, hardly ever attended any committee meetings. Kusumbai belongs to the dominant caste Maratha family, and owns a medium-sized farm in the command area. Similarly, Shobha Patil belongs to another dominant caste Maratha family, and has medium-sized land registered in her name in the command area. Huasabai Gavit belongs to the Adivasi community, and has a small amount of land in the tail-end area of the DY canal registered in her name. Her children look after the farm.

These women obtained committee status due to their ownership of land in the command area, but they are mostly absent during meetings organised by the Association. In general, I observed that the women members do not participate directly in the functioning of the Association. In my experience, I found that it is generally a husband or a son who participates on the woman's behalf in the functioning of the Association. In fact, it seems to be a common norm accepted among the members that a husband or a son will attend the meeting on behalf of the female member.

The unequal participation among the committee members, as well as farmers, becomes more evident at the annual meeting conducted by the Association. The WUA organises an annual meeting for all members of the Association at

the beginning of September. During my time at the Association, the meeting was organised late, at the end of September. Kusumabi was the only woman out of all the women members who attended the meeting, which started a little late owing to the rain. She was seated on a chair in the middle of a group of male farmers who were sitting on the floor. Her son sat a few spaces away from her. Just before the meeting was about to start, Sudham Taty and Shriram Taty were still making calls to other farmers asking them to attend the meeting, and to stop giving excuses. Once it was confirmed that no others farmers would be attending, Sudhama Taty asked the Secretary to start the meeting.

After the official procedure of presenting the annual accounts of the Association, the forum was opened to the farmers to discuss their issues. The inconvenience caused to a farmer due to the lack of a field channel was one issue raised by a small farmer known as Shiva Patil, who also works as a driver at Project Level Association at the Mahabalipur Dam. His opponent was a large landowning farmer who refuted the charges, and then asked the Chairman about other farmers who were appropriating the field channel. There was an atmosphere of great confusion among the members, who all tried to say something to resolve the issue. The main farmers who contributed to the discussion were SudhamaTaty and Appa (who belongs to the Morey family, who own a large grape farm that exports grapes to the international market). The atmosphere was confusing, and time and time again the members asked the Chairman to initiate action against some of the other members. The Chairman sat silently, and had nothing to say about the controversy, whilst all the effort was made by the Tatyas to resolve the differences among the farmers. The Chairman's son did not contribute during the discussion.

From the way this meeting was conducted, it appeared that the Chairman was merely a figurehead of the institution, devoid of any power to exercise her duties and responsibilities in such a situation. Also, members of the lower castes and non-dominant caste members did not say anything about the controversy at the meeting. This demonstrated that the non-dominant castes

and the female members were powerless in the institution, and it was dominated by just a few powerful male actors.

When I wanted to interview these female committee members to understand their perspective on the functioning of WUAs, and their experience in the Association, I found that being a male researcher gave me limited access to the women members. However, when I sought to conduct an interview, the circumstances of the interview were different in every case.

Firstly, I decided to try to interview Shobha Patil, and I decided to visit her farm. When I visited, Patilbai and her son, Sachin Patil, greeted me and offered me water. Her son was interested to know more about why I wanted to speak with his mother, and I explained that I wanted to ask his mother about her experience on the Managing Committee. To this he replied, “She hardly knows anything about it,” and he said that it would be better to speak with his father. However, his father had gone to Nashik, and so he asked me to come back later. During this conversation, the mother just stood there, and only spoke to agree with her son. Therefore, this attempt at an interview ended without any response from Patilbai (Interview with Shobah Patil, member of Managing Committee of the Parvati WUA, and a medium landholding farmer, in Rampur in May, 2012).

This was not the first time I had experienced this kind of response when I wanted to speak with a woman member or woman committee member. I experienced something similar when I wanted to speak to Kusumbai, the Chairman of the Parvati WUA. Kusumbai is an elderly woman in her fifties, who lives with her only son and his family in their farm house. They have around ten to twelve acres of land, and they cultivate grapes, sugar cane, vegetables, and wheat, etc. Whenever I tried to speak to Kusumbai, I was always accompanied by one of the staff members of the Association; they would drop by just as I was about to start to visit Kusumbai to ask her about her experiences. When I eventually got to speak to her, Kusumbai asked me about the status of the water supply and Mahabalipur’s capability to provide five rotations of water. The question confused me because I was not someone who would know the answer to this. It was Tukaram (the Patkari of the Parvati

WUA) who replied, and he informed her about the status of the Mahabalipur Dam.

During my conversation with Kusumbai, all the questions I asked were always repeated to her by staff members or her son. She answered quite vaguely, and most of her responses were supported and had information added to them by the staff members. I felt this was not due to her inability to present a consistent argument, but rather due to lack of information and knowledge about certain aspects of the Association. Kusumbai expressed trust in the Secretary and in the other staff members of the Association (Interview with Kusumbai, Chairman of the Parvati WUA and a medium landholding farmer, in Rampur in May, 2012).

Image 7: The Independence Day Function at the Parvati WUA office.



Generally, I found that the replies given by the women committee members were very similar, in one way or another. When I tried to interview the Chairman of Baliraja WUA, (a WUA in a nearby village that had received the state government award for the most efficient Association in the state) her husband conducted the interview instead, and he presented himself with so much confidence and command that it was easy to assume that he, rather than his wife, was Chairman of the Association. During the entire interview she just hovered around us, providing tea and *pohe* (a local snack provided to guests in Maharashtra). I found the entire situation frustrating. If she had anything

interesting to share, she was not given the chance to do so, and instead, she just stood there listening to us. Whenever I made an effort to include her in the discussion, she pointed to the Secretary and said, “With such a good and honest Secretary, the Association does not need to worry about these things.” This was the only statement she made before leaving the room. My efforts to include her in the discussion failed, and so, to avoid upsetting her husband, I stopped asking her any further questions.

When I spoke to Hausabai (a member of the Managing Committee of Parvati WUA), I found her to be more articulate in comparison to the other two women committee members of the Parvati WUA. Hausabai is an elderly woman in her fifties, who owns a small piece of land at the end of the canal. She lives with her two sons on the farm. She told me that she attended a programme organised by the Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI) at Aurangabad. When I spoke to her, at first she talked about Aurangabad city and the different historical places she had visited during her trip. She said it had been a good experience to step out of the village and go to Aurangabad. She was accompanied by other members of the Association, including Kusumbai and Patilbai. She told me that the Association functions well in the area, and that the farmers get their water regularly. However, she said that, in the past, experiences with the Irrigation Department had not been good, and so the farmers initiated the effort to form the Association, and to distribute the water among the community.

I found my interview with Hausabai to be short, and it took place not on her farm, but on another farm where she was working. So next time, when I tried to contact her at her own farm, her son stopped me and answered all of my questions, without giving me the opportunity to talk to Hausabai. Her son then immediately reported my visit to the Association. During my time at the Association, Hausabai attended only one meeting, and then she merely signed the register and left (Interview with Hausabai, member of Parvati WUA Committee, Rampur, in May 2012).

I found these four interviews confirmed the findings of other studies that show how the irrigation sector continues to be dominated by male farmers. I

found that one needs to understand the participation of the women on the basis of caste, class and on the age of the participants. I found that Shobha Patil never attended the meetings because of the continued sanctity attached to the norm of upper-caste, middle-aged married women attending a public forum. This sanctity seems to be relaxed in the case of elderly women from the upper castes, as seen in the case of Kusumbai, and with Hausabai, who belongs to the Adivasi community.

Women's participation in the WUAs I studied did not challenge the local power networks embedded within the scope of gender relationships and other forms of hierarchies, such as caste and class. I found that the participation of women and the participation of the non-dominant caste members in Parvati was merely a symbolic representation of the policy of the WUA. Instead of working to raise consciousness against oppression, mobilising, and building a wider understanding of gender and caste relations, the idea of participation has become a 'category of governance', as noted by Chatterjee (2004, p.69), and is devoid of its real meaning of empowering the marginalised. This notion of participation sustains the domination of the male upper-caste farmers in the WUAs.

5.8 Conclusion

I found that the processes of WUA formation and functioning are dominated by male upper-caste members. This was evident from the role played by Baba Pawar in the formation of the WUA. It seems that Baba Pawar, and others in the WUA, deny the role played by others in the formation process. Also, even in the day-to-day functioning of the WUA, the opinion of non-dominant caste members has hardly any influence on the actual decision-making processes.

This situation is even graver for women members who, in reality, are denied a voice by their families. Even though some women occupy an important position in the WUA, such as the Chairman of the WUA, this has not transformed gender dynamics in the WUA. The woman Chairperson performs the role of chairman with the very close supervision and guidance of male dominant-caste farmers, and is kept away from important issues that matter in

the WUA. These findings agree with those of Duggan (2003), who explains that it is important to move beyond class distinctions into a wider cultural sphere to understand the process of neo-liberalism, and how it has concentrated power in the hands of the tiny elite. This scenario raises questions about inequalities imposed by the market and those that pre-exist in society.

Fraser (2012) builds on Polyani's idea of society as an egalitarian ideal devoid of inequalities and exploitation. In reality, society is made up of inequalities, and so it is important to wage a struggle not only against the inequalities imposed by the market, but to address simultaneously other inequalities in society. It is interesting to look at the role played by NGOs in the process of ameliorating these social inequalities. The concept of empowerment needs to be critically understood in relation to who is empowering whom. The credibility and neutrality of the local NGO is called into question when it receives favours and grants that are sanctioned for different specific development projects by the state. The members of the local NGO are 'outsiders' who lack credibility in the eyes of the villagers. Therefore, the NGO looks for support from the dominant caste farmers in order to achieve acceptability, and to gather support among the villagers in order to successfully implement the policy. Similarly, the need of the local NGO to sustain itself in competition with other NGOs in the competitive market of development programmes and projects drives them to enter into negotiations with the dominant farmers in order to achieve their goals. The drive of NGOs to make projects 'successful' reduces revolutionary zeal among its activists, who find it convenient to accept, rather than to challenge and change, the given social and economic structure. I find that the local NGO functioning in the area does not prioritise addressing these inequalities in society.

A similar approach has also been taken by the State,, which is merely interested in implementing the policy with the cooperation of the farmers. It is definitely a progressive step taken by the state through the legislation of the MMISF Act-2005, to reserve a seat for women members in the WUA. However, the State does not seem to be interested in enforcing or implementing the Act. I believe that the implementation of the Act has been

left to the farmers and the NGO in the area. It seems to me that the State is merely interested in increasing its revenue by passing reforms in its own interest. The increases in the price of irrigation water is essentially the commodification of water, and access to water by poor and marginalised farmers is not a priority; rather, the priority is encouraging capitalistic development in the agricultural sector.

Therefore, rather than transforming traditional structures of power, the neo-liberal agenda has strengthened traditional structures of power in the village. The idea of participatory governance through WUAs serves to sustain existing social relationships among the different actors involved in the project. The idea of participation works only on the level of symbolism, and is used by the dominant actors to demonstrate the ‘acceptability’ of the policy in the wider social domain. In reality, the policy sustains and strengthens pre-existing caste and class relationships amongst the participants in the WUA. This is evident from the behaviour of the WUA employees, and the role of the committee members in resolving conflicts among the farmers.

Chapter-6

Formation and Functioning of Water Users Associations II: Lakshmi Water Users Association

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the practice of Water Users Associations' (WUAs) policy in the area of Lakshmi. This chapter draws insight from the previous chapters in terms of the arguments that it presents. At this WUA, it can also be observed that the influence and importance of an individual or a group is acknowledged not merely by the amount of land they own, but by their involvement in the WUA. In this manner, individuals and groups can either manipulate the supply of water for personal gain, or use it to enhance their position among other farmers within the community. WUA involvement, especially at committee level, is considered to be another route through which power can be exercised by large landowning farmers in the village. The following stories, which are covered throughout the chapter, show how the distribution of water is managed and controlled by dominant caste members in the village. This shows the way access to resources is controlled by the dominant caste groups, to impose their dominance on the others in the village.

The chapter presents evidence in the form of participatory observations carried out during the water rotation periods from December to April (2011-2012), and in the form of informal interviews carried out with farmers and committee members. The chapter attempts to demonstrate how the wider WUA policy, which speaks to of the increased participation and empowerment of farmers, is not realised in reality. Rather than challenging the existing hierarchical and social relationships in the village, the WUA policy sustains them. As argued by Mosse (2005), the development project sustains these social relationships in terms of caste and class hierarchies in the process of producing a successful model that can be replicated in other places.

This chapter is divided into sections, which will cover: the process of the formation of the Lakshmi WUA (6.1), the structure of this WUA (6.2), the important functions carried out by the WUA (6.3), the nature of participation as it is realised at this WUA (focussing on issues of accountability and empowerment) (6.4), and the last two sections will undertake a comparative analysis of the Parvati and Lakshmi WUAs, highlighting their similarities and differences (6.5), and will sum up the arguments presented in this chapter and draw conclusions (6.6).

6.2 The Formation of the Lakshmi WUA

In this section, I compare and discuss two different stories, the first of which is narrated by the two founding members of the WUAs, and the other being the official story told by the irrigation department and NGOs about process of formation and functioning of the WUAs. In the end, I draw upon similarities and differences in the stories in order to gain a better understanding of the formation process. My intent is to verify the official story and to capture the differences (if any) that exists between the two versions, in order to understand the actual process of the formation of WUAs.

The Lakshmi WUA is named after the popular local deity ‘Lakshmi’, a female goddess who resides in the hills of the village. The Lakshmi Association is located at the tail end of the command area of the Mahabalipur Dam. It receives irrigation water through three minor channels (Minor 10, Minor 10A and the Distributor Outlet). Minor 10 extends to the tail end of the region, which is occupied by farmers belonging to non-dominant caste groups, such as the Mali and Shepherd. The field channel is in good condition, with a few minor exceptions. The command area of Minor 10A is occupied by the Maratha farmers, and most of the members of the Director body; the field channels in this area are not properly constructed, and during water rotation periods, most of the water flows down onto the road. The outlet gates are named after the surname or caste name of the farmers of the particular command area, such as the Tidke Company Gate, the Phule Company Gate, and the Shepherd Gate (for a map of the Lakshmi WUA command area, refer to Appendix Five).

This WUA is part of a larger WUA movement in the area led by Bhausaheb Upadhey (the founder of the local NGO, SVK (*Samajik Vikas Kendra*) in the area). It was established in 1998 under the Co-operative Society Act, 1948. According to one of its founding members, Devaram Pawar, a small farmer belonging to the dominant Maratha caste group, this WUA was established during the same time as the other two WUAs in the village. Devaram told me that, in the initial stages of formation, the farmers doubted the WUAs' potential for success, and the farmers would often make fun of the founding members. Devaram told me that influential farmers, such as Sainath Bhau (the father of Yashwantrao Pawar, the current Head of Village Panchayat) encouraged farmers to work for the organisation (Interview with Devaram Pawar, small farmer, Rampur, May, 2012). The support of Sainath Bhau helped Devaram in gaining the trust of the other farmers in the village.

Devaram informed me that in the early days of the Association, there was conflict amongst the members over water sharing. It was not an easy task to resolve these differences among the members. During the initial phases of formation, the local NGO (SPK) and Bharat Bhau helped Devaram to manage the office and to compile the necessary paper work that was needed to establish the WUA. The SPK taught Devaram how to maintain records, measure the water, and conduct meetings, among other tasks. The Association's members attended workshops organised by the Irrigation Department to promote the efficient functioning of the WUA, and these were held at WALMI (The Water and Land Management Institute), in Aurangabad. These workshops provided guidance about the technical aspects, and management of, irrigation water- such as conducting measurements and calculations, and providing support to set up an office. Devaram stated that, with the help of the Irrigation Department and the local NGO, 'the WUA was established and developed by them.' (Interview with Devaram Pawar, small farmer, Rampur, May, 2012.) Eventually Devaram left the WUA, and handed over his role to the emerging leadership in the village.

A similar story was recounted by Phule Gurji (a medium farmer belonging to the Mali caste) who, along with Devaram, helped to establish the WUA in the

village. He revealed that, initially, the farmers did not want to form an Association. The farmers had doubts about its potential success, and were unsure as to whether the resources would be distributed fairly. However, over a period of nine years, the Association was established, and now manages water distribution effectively. The two interviewees, Devaram and Phule Guruji, tended to glorify the setting up of the WUA, and both spoke of the reluctance shown on the part of the farmers.

In the case of these two interviewees, both confirm the official story regarding the formation of the WUAs, denoting it as more of a top-down approach, rather than an initiative that was led by the farmers. In these interviews, unlike the earlier interviews of the founding members of the Parvati WUAs, I find that there are less acts of self-glorification in terms of the WUAs. In fact, I found that both of the members emphasised the role played by Sainath Bhau, an influential dominant-caste farmer in the village. I found that Devaram was more inclined to appreciate the role of Sainath Bhau, seemingly on the grounds of belonging to the same caste group. As I was later informed by an employee of the Parvati WUA, the reason for Devaram becoming President of the WUA was, in part, owing to his close association with Sainath Bhau. I believe that this is one of the things that compelled Devaram to maintain his silence over the issue of the mismanagement of funds and field channels in the area. The other interesting reason for Devaram's silence, which I discovered later on during a talk with Sunil (the Secretary of the WUA), is the role of committee members. Sunil commented on the two interviewees, stating that the members remain silent on the issue of conflict, as the matters are solely determined by the WUA's staff, and the committee carries no fault in it. Sunil pointed out that the members do this in order to disguise their own inability to resolve the conflicts in the command area.

6.3 The Structure of the Association

The WUA is made up of a Managing Committee (MC) of nine members, comprising three people each from the head, middle and tail of the command area. The Managing Committee is comprised of farmers from different caste and class groups. Apart from the Marathas, only the Mali caste has a

significant and active presence in the WUA. The reason for the significant Mali input is because the Association covers the entire Phule belt, which is home to the majority of the Mali caste (along the Lakhanpur Road and along the Karnuli-Sakora Road). As well as this, some of the Mali representatives hold important positions in the village. For example, Phule Guruji is a teacher, and he is a medium-sized landowner of ten to twelve acres; his landholding includes a Poly House that covers almost an acre, in which he cultivates roses. Phule Guruji is a founding member of the WUA. All these factors put together strengthen his position in the WUA. Another example is Mohan Tidke who is a medium landowner, an active member of the Shiv Sena political party, and a close associate of Nana Patil (The Chairman of the WUA). A previous Chairman of the WUA was Raju Phule, who belongs to the Mali caste. He has a medium-sized landholding, and he has constructed his own Poly House of nearly of one and half acres in, which he also cultivates roses.

These Mali members give a strong voice to the Mali farmers in the village. However, in spite of the large presence and active participation of the Mali farmers in the Association, it remains predominantly controlled by the Maratha caste farmers. The Association command area covers the land of two influential Maratha families: the Patil family, who live in the head region of the minor canal, and the Pawar family, who live in the middle part of the minor canal. Some of the Pawar family also lives in the head region. From these two families, the Pawar family is the most dominant in the running of the WUA, primarily due to the influential position of Sainath Bhau (the head of the Pawar family) in village politics. Over the years, Sainath has passed this leadership over to his son, Yashwantrao Pawar, who heads the Association at the time of writing. On the surface, it appears that the Managing Committee represents all castes within the area, but, in reality it is a domain of power for the dominant Pawar family. This dynamic will be explored further in the section entitled 'Participation and Perception'.

One of the Lakshmi WUA employees is a Secretary, Sunil Patil, who belongs to the Patil family (a dominant Maratha caste family). The Lakshmi WUA does not have a permanent *Patkari*. Again, a *Patkari* is an employee who

works under the supervision of the Secretary in order to distribute water among the farmers. The primary reason provided by the Secretary for not employing a permanent Patkari is that the Association is small and that it cannot afford to pay a monthly salary to a permanent Patkari throughout the year. Additionally, the Secretary believes that it is more convenient and economical to employ a Patkari on a contract basis only, during the water rotation period, because this saves up to six months' salary. It appears that the Committee members want to employ another individual as Patkari, but the Secretary is less keen on the idea of employing another person for financial reasons. Politics among the dominant caste families, and the decisions they make, will be explored in detail in the later section on Participation and Perception.

Image 8: The annual meeting of managing committee of Lakshmi WUA.



6.4 Functions of the Lakshmi WUA

As stated earlier, the Association carries out two main functions. Firstly, it distributes water among the farmers, and, secondly, it resolves conflicts between farmers. Other functions performed include the collection of water charges, and the distribution of annual reports.

According to official procedure prescribe by the policy, it is the duty of employees at the Irrigation Department to unlock the main canal and allow water to pass through the sub-minor of the WUA, further down to the fields. The WUA measures the water at the outlet level of the sub-minor canal, and then distributes it among the farmers. However, in practice, I observed that the employees of the Irrigation Department are only nominally present at the canal. It is the Secretary of the WUA who performs the task of unlocking and transferring the water. The Secretary carries out the duties of the employee of the Irrigation Department as a sign of goodwill towards the employees of the Department. This goodwill is used to maintain a positive relationship with the Irrigation Department.

According to the water rotation schedule, Associations located at the tail-end area receive water from the main canal first, and then water is received by the middle region and, lastly, by the head region. Lakshmi is located just above the tail-end region, and, therefore, technically, it is not able to deliver water to the tail end of the area first. Therefore, the Irrigation Department allows the Lakshmi WUA to withdraw water at the tail end due to the uneven topography of the land. At Lakshmi, each of the three main outlets is located on the hilly terrain, near the main canal. Therefore, in order to pump the water from the main canal to the end of the command area, it needs to sustain adequate water pressure. A certain amount of water pressure is usually present at the start of the water rotation, when the water is pumped heavily through the main canal. In the interests of fair distribution, the Department allows Lakshmi WUA to withdraw water one day after the other Associations in the tail-end area have withdrawn their supply. In this way, the administration adopts a flexible approach towards Lakshmi, and takes into consideration the particular conditions under which the WUA operates.

One reason why the Secretary affords goodwill towards the employees of the Irrigation Department is to try to secure fair usage of water because, in this respect, favouritism is shown by the Irrigation Department towards employees of Parvati. This favouritism will be discussed in more detail in the later section

of this chapter, which makes a comparative analysis between Parvati and Lakshmi WUAs.

6.5 Water Rotation

In this section, I will discuss the observations I made during the water rotation period in relation to water distribution. The incidents related below show that the practice of water distribution is not merely a practical issue, but is a vehicle through which power and privilege are exercised in the area by dominant families.

Image 9: The Secretary of WUA unlocking the outlet of the sub minor of the canal.



During the water rotation period, water is carried down from the sub-minor level to the farm outlets under the supervision of the Secretary of the Lakshmi. It takes almost twelve hours for water from the main canal to reach the tail end of the command area. Both the Secretary and the *Patakri* try to ensure that the water flows freely through the channels by removing all obstacles in the channel, including garbage, dried tomato plants, pesticides, bottles, cans, and other debris. I observed that, in spite of the advice given by the Secretary to the farmers, which was not to throw waste into the channels, the farmers continue to do this. The villages call this *shet chari manje gavachi devdasi*

(meaning that the channel is the Devadasiⁱⁱ of the village). It is only after 1.00a.m. or 2.00 a.m. that the Secretary starts distributing the water amongst the farmers. I discovered that in order to check the pressure of the water, the Secretary uses the simple strategy of inserting a wooden stick into the surface level of the water in the canal. By observing the flow of water in relation to the wooden stick, it is easy to determine whether the water pressure has decreased or increased. The Secretary uses a common-sense method to measure the water level. The Secretary knows the amount of land held by every farmer, and the amount of water consumed by each particular type of crop. On the basis of this information, he formulates a Schedule of Water Distribution, to be rotated among the farmers within the command area. The Secretary ensures that the water is distributed appropriately from one farmer to another farmer with minimal waste of water. He contacts the individual farmers using his mobile phone, and he visits them personally to ensure that they are ready to open up their channels in order to receive water.

It is interesting to observe how mobile phones are used by employees to ensure that farmers are aware of their turn, and to maintain the schedule, although I found that it was not always necessary to use mobile phones to make the farmers aware of their turn. Sometimes, the Patil farmers do not bother to answer calls from the Secretary, in order to avoid participating in water rotation at night or early in the morning. By not answering the phone, they try to skip the late night rotation. In order to avoid this, the Secretary takes the extra effort of making a personal call to them, to encourage them to receive their turn of water at the allocated time.

The first to receive water are the farmers from the Mali belt (the Phule belt) located in the middle of the command. The Secretary informs them on a prior basis, so they can prepare to take their turn at an allotted time. Most Mali farmers take their turn at night. Water is rotated between the Mali farmers, usually without problems or conflict arising. Eventually, the flow is directed towards the head region, where the Patil farmers live, and, finally, the water rotation ends at a supply tank in the local village. It takes almost a full week to complete one water rotation. The duration of water rotations varies from four

to eight days, depending on the season, and on the availability of water. For Lakshmi, the first two rotations of water are allotted on the basis of land ownership, and the following three water rotations (including the two summer rotations) are allotted on an hourly basis.

I observed that, although water rotation appears to be a practical matter, its organisation also reveals the power dynamics that exist within the village. One of the reasons as to why the Mali farmers receive their water first is not just because their land is located in the middle of the command area, but, rather, it is because they challenged the suggested arrangements for the distribution of water. The weaker social position of the Mali farmers, compared with the dominant-caste farmers, puts them in a compromised position. Although they receive their water first, they complain that they are made to collect it at night, even during the cold nights of the winter season. There are some Mali farmers who strongly resist this position, such as Govind, who has a small plot of land in the Phule belt along the Dindori Road. Govind states, “it is only the Mali farmers who are asked to take their water at night and who must suffer the cold, while the Patil farmers receive their share during the day.”(Govind Phule, small farmer, Rampur, December 2012.)

I discovered that Govind’s claim was somewhat exaggerated, and not entirely true, as I found that other middle-caste group farmers also receive water late at night. I observed that some Maratha farmers are allowed to receive water at their own convenience. The claim is mostly true for Maratha farmers belonging to the dominant Patil family in the head region. The preference given by the Secretary to Patil farmers became clear to me when I listened to a conversation between a Patil farmer from the head region and the Secretary. The young Patil farmer, Mallahar Patil, is the son of Motiram Patil, the former head of the Panchayat village. When the Secretary asked him to be prepared for his water rotation, the farmer replied that the Secretary did not need to worry about this, because Mallahar already knew when he would be receiving his turn. Mallahar quickly added that he estimates his turn by calculating the time taken by other farmers to water their crops. Due to Mallahar’s friendship with the Secretary, Mallahar was allowed to pass his allotted time slot onto

another farmer- but only if it fell at night; thereby avoiding the inconvenience of having to water his crops in the early morning hours. The young farmer was confident that the non-Patil farmers would have no choice but to follow the schedule given to them. This conversation between the Secretary and the young farmer sheds light on the manner through which dominant farmers use their friendships and family connections to extract favours. It demonstrates how certain situations are affected by a farmer's position in terms of caste and class in the village.

Image 10: The farmer Jadhav Baba a small farmer giving water to the crops.



I observed that the Secretary offers different treatment to non-dominant caste farmers, not only in terms of the allotment of water, but also relating to accountability for the use of water. In general, I found that the Secretary, at times, speaks to non-dominant caste farmers in a disrespectful manner, but he treats dominant caste farmers politely. This became evident by observing the way the Secretary used endearing nicknames to address the dominant caste members, such as Tatya, or Anna (meaning 'elder uncle' or 'brother'). Whereas, when the Secretary addressed non-dominant caste members, he will always use their full names.

Umesh Vanaley is a young farmer in his twenties who belongs to the Shepherd caste, and he owns a small piece of land in the command area. The Secretary, who is older than Umesh, addresses Umesh using his first name, in a friendly manner. However, sometimes, the Secretary treats Umesh very casually and does not take the issues Umesh raises seriously. If Umesh persists in challenging the Secretary, the Secretary becomes angry, and begins to use slang terms and offensive language, knowing that Umesh does not have any power to oppose it.

I found that the Secretary often attempts to override Umesh's opinions and suggestions- not only about water management, but also in relation to other issues that affect the village. During water rotation, the Secretary often spends time with Umesh, but their friendly relationship is more advantageous to the Secretary. For instance, when no-one else is available to take water at night, he always asks Umesh to divert the water to his farm, even if it is not his turn, and without giving much prior notice. However, if Umesh refuses the offer, or is negligent by overflowing his fields, the Secretary will shout at him, and will reprimand him as if he has committed a grave mistake. Umesh confided that one evening, when he was having dinner, the Secretary called him to ask him to divert water from his fields into the fields of another farmer, in order to avoid waste. Umesh had no choice but to abandon his dinner in order to rush to the fields in order to obey the Secretary's orders. I observed that one of the reasons for Secretary's behaviour to Umesh was not just because of caste dynamics, but related to class dynamics as well.

Dhokarey Pawar is a large landowning farmer who belongs to the dominant Maratha caste, and he receives respectful treatment from the Secretary. His farm is located on the lower side of the Phule belt. One night, during the winter water rotation, in the month of December, Dhokarey Pawar was not keeping watch on his supply of water as it passed through the channel, and the field channel broke during his turn, which meant that excess water drained into other farmers' fields. Pawar asked me to help him construct a small mud channel, to divert the flow of excess water into the fields of the other farmers. Later on, however, the Secretary asked the same farmers to divert their flow of

water, in order to avoid causing damage to the crops. Throughout the night, the Secretary asserted that he would ask Pawar to justify his behaviour, and would fine him for his negligence. However, the next day, the Secretary did not take any action against Pawar, and was more gracious than ever towards the farmer. Instead, he requested that the farmer ask his son to keep check on the field channel during the next rotation, in order to avoid the undue waste of water.

Two other stories, as related below, show the variations in treatment given towards farmers of different castes by the WUA.

The first story involves the Chairman of the Lakshmi WUA. I observed that the gate of the Distributary Outlet (DO)- an outlet which is used to provide water to the farm of the Chairman and his brother- is not properly monitored by the Secretary. The D.O. outlet is located in the upstream region, near the main canal, and it provides water exclusively to the farms of the Chairman of the Association and his brother. It appears that this outlet was created specifically and exclusively for the use of these farms. During a discussion I had with the mother of Govind Phule, a woman in her nineties, she told me that Sainath Bhau lobbied the Irrigation Department for a separate outlet for his own farms that are located near the main canal. (The politics behind the renewal work undertaken to the Mahabalipur Dam has already been outlined in Chapter 1.) However, unlike the other outlet gates, this one did not have a proper lock, and it was tied up using a piece of string wire. It is interesting to note that the Secretary hardly ever visits this outlet, and its management by the nearby large landholding farmers is undertaken on trust. The Chairman cultivates grapes, and his farm is managed by his brother and is regularly visited, and taken care of, by Sanjeev (the Secretary of Parvati).

A similar case relates to a group of farmers belonging to the Pawar family. These farmers own land in the upstream region; however; this area is mostly comprised of barren land, and does not have access to irrigation water. However, these lands were once held as pasture lands in the village. The Secretary confided that these farmers started to pump water illegally at night from sub-minor 10 to their farms. As a result, a conflict arose between the

Secretary and the farmers. However, the Secretary did not take any formal action against the farmers, due to their family and political connections within the village. Eventually, the Secretary asked the group of farmers to enter into a new arrangement, whereby they paid a charge for water that was deposited into the village lake. The farmers were given permission to pump water from the lake using pipelines that lead to their farms. The Secretary stated that this arrangement is now in place, and outlined that the farmers are now obligated to pay for water they once obtained without charge. However, what remains unclear is how much water is deposited in the lake. I observed that, during the last two days of the water rotation, the WUA continuously supplied water to the lake. So, although the farmers now pay a fee, they may be receiving an unlimited amount of water, because no information is held relating to how much water is actually pumped into the lake. Furthermore, in the final days of rotation, the Pawar farmers make vocal demands for their fair share of water. Even though the Secretary does not feel an affinity with them, or partial to their approach, he has to make sure they get their fair share of water in due time.

These incidents reveal that the different treatment received by non-dominant caste farmers is a result of ingrained social ideas that are based not only on their class and wealth, but also relate to their caste status. Irrespective of wealth, farmers who belong to the upper castes enjoy the privilege and convenience of receiving their water at a time that suits them, and they enjoy additional water privileges. The Secretary hardly ever challenges these powerful individuals in the command area, whereas he is quick to challenge farmers of a lower caste. The Secretary tends to issue *orders* to the lower castes and make *requests* to the upper castes. In these circumstances, the claims made by the WUAs that water is now an economic commodity, and, therefore, all farmers are equal as users or consumers, does not translate into reality. Even though all the farmers pay equal water charges, the WUA continues to differentiate between farmers according to caste and class, and this affects accessibility to irrigation water in the area.

6.6 The Collection of Water Charges and Other Duties

The Association also maintains financial records and water audit records. The Secretary regularly collects water charges from the farmers during the water rotation period. He also distributes annual report pamphlets published by the Association that detail the annual financial budget of the Association. I found that most Associations produce this annual budget pamphlet, rather than the booklet mentioned in the policy documents, in order to save money on printing costs. I noticed that an Association will often print a well-formatted booklet only when it wants to participate in the annual competition for the best WUA in the State, as organised by the Government of Maharashtra.ⁱⁱⁱ The booklet has become the unofficial means of announcing that an Association is preparing to participate in the competition.

The functioning of the WUA is affected by the needs of the everyday lives of the farmers. For example, to complete a quorum at the monthly meeting, as well as at the annual meeting, the Secretary personally visits the farmers to make sure they sign the attendance sheet. This practice shows the inability of the WUA to implement institutional practices among the farmers who regularly visit the Association offices, and attend meetings and other events conducted by the WUA. The farmers tend to fulfil their nominal responsibilities, without much concern regarding the functioning of the WUA.

In addition to these functions, in order to maintain a positive relationship between the Associations and the Irrigation Department, the Secretary performs additional functions for the Irrigation Department. These functions include: compiling a voter list during elections at the WUAs and collecting data about cropping patterns in the area. In general, it is the responsibility of the Irrigation Department to produce and maintain the voter list, but the Irrigation Department prefer to pass on this work to the Project Level Association (henceforth PLA), and the WUA. I observed that the employees at the WUAs and the PLA unwillingly carry out these duties as a goodwill gesture. Some WUAs have refused to comply with this voluntary work, such as the Secretary of the Lakshmi, who has, in the past, refused to make a voter list. However, he finally submitted a list after taking into consideration the

difficulties that he might encounter in the future if he turns down the demands of the employees at the Irrigation Department. Similarly, the WUA collects data about the areas under irrigation, and about crops cultivated in the area, and submits this information to the Irrigation Department. The performance of these additional functions demonstrates how informal relationships are developed between the WUA, the PLA, and the Irrigation Department. The Irrigation Department offers scope to the WUAs and to the PLA regarding the allotment of water and the payment of water charges, and the WUAs and PLA assist the Department by performing these official tasks.

6.7 Participation and Perception

The participation of small landholding farmers in the functioning of the WUA seems to be a goal that is only partially achieved by the WUA in reality. Unlike in Parvati, farmers of non-dominant castes in Lakshmi are more active on the Committee of the WUA. This is evident, and displayed from the active participation of Phule Guruji, Raju Phule and Tidke. All three committee members belong to the Mali caste. When I use the term ‘active participation’, I mean participation in the decision-making process, as well as making suggestions to the Managing Committee; carrying out other activities of the organisation, such as representing the WUA at functions carried out by the local NGO; and representing the WUA at meetings and events organised by the Irrigation Department at the village level, as well as at the Taluka level. The active participation of the Mali members has resulted in dominant castes having to consider the opinions of other caste groups, if only to maintain an image of democracy. Another reason why the dominant castes tolerate this involvement is to ensure that they obtain Mali support in important matters of local concern to them- such as in the sphere of village politics, for example.

As stated previously, the reason behind the active participation of some members of Mali caste is due to their unique social and economic position in the village. However, other farmers, such as Tanaji Phule, who also belong to the Mali caste, have the same status as some of the aforementioned Mali farmers within the Association. However, in spite of the active participation of Mali members in regards to raising concerns and making suggestions, their

influence remains limited. The real power is still maintained by the Patil farmers and the Pawar farmers. The WUA is known as the domain of Yashwantrao Pawar (the head of Panchayat village), who enjoys considerable support among members in the Association owing to his father's dominance in village politics.

Even though the Lakshmi is a small WUA, it does not enlist the complete participation of its committee members in the monthly and annual meetings of the WUA. I observed that the Secretary has to put continuous effort into requesting their participation, time and time again, by providing incentives such as sweets and tea during the annual meeting. I observed that the small farmers of the Association hardly ever attend the annual meeting, and those who did attend were often pressured by the Secretary of the Association. When they do attend, the smaller landholding farmers hardly ever express their views at the meeting. They always seem to accept the view or opinion put forward by the committee members, without asking any questions, or initiating any discussion.

In Lakshmi, there is a complete absence of women's participation in the functioning of the Association. I saw hardly any women attend the meetings that I attended throughout the year. At least in Parvati, women attend the meetings, even if their contribution is stifled. At Lakshmi, neither the committee members nor the Secretary make any effort to enhance the participation of the women in the functioning of the WUA.

In a nutshell, it can be seen that the participation of some of the Mali farmers in the Association has altered the structure of power relationships among the members. However, the Managing Committee continues not to recognise the importance of the participation of women in the functioning of the WUA.

6.8 The Role of the WUA in Village Politics

Non-dominant caste members perceive the domain of the WUA as belonging to two dominant families in the village: Patil and Pawar. The stories relayed below reveal how small landholding farmers and non-dominant caste members

perceive the functioning of the WUA. These stories also demonstrate how the WUA plays a role in the wider scope of village politics, and how the WUA has become the centre of political activity for the two presiding families within the village.

At the time of writing, the current Secretary of the WUA is Sunil Patil, who belongs to the dominant Patil family. The members of the Association conveyed that Sunil was the former *Patkari*, and he worked under the supervision of the then-Secretary, Sham Pawar, who belonged to the dominant Pawar Maratha caste family. Sunil worked for five years as the *Patkari*, and during this time, he learned how water is managed and circulated amongst the farmers. However, Sunil began to complain about Sham, and accused him of not carrying out his responsibilities well. Sunil claimed that he was doing all of the work at the WUA.

Later on, I discovered that Sham had regular conflicts with the Patil family over water use during water rotation periods. The committee members told me that Sham was very strict with the Patil family when he allotted water, but it was not known whether he was also strict with other farmers as well. Reports made by other farmers suggest they were happy with the distribution of water carried out by Sham, but that, due to the family rivalry, it was the Patil farmers who were primarily affected and were complaining about Sham. The Patil farmers regularly argued with Sham about the distribution of water. During one of these arguments, a Patil farmer hit Sham, and accused him of being biased regarding the allotment of water. At this point, Sunil stepped in and began to gain the support of other members of the WUA in order to strengthen his claim to the position of Secretary in the WUA.

After this, Sunil began to circulate stories about Sham's inefficient management of the water. Sunil told me these rumours when I spoke to him and his brother (who is a member of the Parvati WUA) about the matter. Serious debate ensued among committee members about whether or not to remove Sham from his position, and, finally, the resolution was passed to remove Sham from his responsibilities as Secretary of the WUA. Under the Chairmanship of Tidke, Sham's responsibilities were passed to Sunil (who is

the current Secretary). It would appear that, in the end, Sham and the Pawar family lost their battle against the Patil family in the WUA. However, the Pawar family members did not let the incident pass, as soon it was announced by the then-Chairman of the Association, that Tidke (who is a close associate of the Pawar family) had re-employed Sunil on a contract basis, but without the official title of Secretary of the Association. Therefore, the former Secretary continued to be an acting Secretary for a period of almost six to eight months, and was paid the salary of a Secretary during this period. It was not until 2012 that Sunil was finally appointed as the sole official Secretary of the Association.

The non-dominant caste members considered the incident of the removal of the Secretary to be an issue of politics between the two dominant families, rather than being about inefficiencies within the management of the Association. The entire incident was popularly viewed as an extension of the power politics that had played out in the village for years. Furthermore, after Sunil's appointment to his post, the WUA still do not employ a permanent Patkari, and the Secretary continues the practice of employing a temporary Patkari for the WUA rotation periods. When questioned about why this policy was carried forward from one Secretary to another, the members said that Sunil did not employ a permanent *Patkari* mainly due to apprehensions concerning his own position within the WUA. The members made a joke about the entire episode, and said that the Secretary neglected to employ a *Patkari* as he feared that his position would be taken away by the Patkari. The committee members believe that the WUA is like any other local institution, such as the Panchayat, banking, and co-operative societies, in that it has been designed exclusively for the participation of the dominant caste farmers, and the voice of non-dominant caste members is not brought into consideration.

Another reason why the Association employs a temporary Patkari is because it gives the secretary more scope and power within certain farming communities. The younger farmers in the village were on very good terms with the Secretary, and many aspired to the post of temporary *Patakri* within the WUA. This role is convenient for them, because it provides an opportunity to work

for just six months, and they are then able to spend the rest of the year either not working, or working in another capacity, such as in an office. Additionally, the Secretary is able to favour family members, or pick favourites when he is recruiting the post, and, in this way, he is able to safeguard his own position in the WUA. This was evident when Sunil employed Bala Patil, his cousin, as temporary Patkari for the water rotation period from December to February 2012. Bala is also the son of committee member Nana Patil. This may have been a gesture of goodwill for the support he received in his bid to be Secretary. Even though Bala has only passed fourth class, and barely knows how to read and write, he was still employed by Sunil as Patkari of the WUA.

Later on, Bala was removed from his position, and the reasons stated were because he could not read or write, and he was not able to carry out the task of water distribution appropriately. According to the Secretary, Bala was not strict enough with the farmers about the water distribution schedule, especially when he had to deal with members of Patil family. Furthermore, because Bala was a younger member of the Patil family, he was not able to challenge his older family members, especially women, when he was asked to provide extra time for watering the crops. As a result, delays occurred in the water distribution schedule that Sunil had planned. In order to avoid these delays, Sunil appointed Sunil Jadhav, a farmer from the head region of Minor 10 A, as temporary Patkari of the WUA. Sunil told me that it was necessary to employ Sunil Jadhav because other farmers were beginning to notice a bias towards the Patil family. So, in employing Sunil Jadhav, he has attempted to find a balance between the two families in the structure of the WUA. This explanation shows the extent to which villagers take for granted the domination of these two powerful families.

It is clear that rivalry between the two dominant-caste families influences the domain of the WUA. Therefore, in spite of claims made by the WUAs to be an *apolitical* organisation, in reality, it is recognised by villagers as falling within the domain of partisan politics.

6.9 A Comparative Analysis of Parvati and Saptsrungi

6.9.1 Differences

1. Popular Perceptions

I found that the popular perception among farmers in the area is that Lakshmi is the most effective WUA for the equitable distribution of water. This contradicts the official position of the Associations, as it was Parvati that received the prestigious Ahilabai Holkar Pani Vatpa Sansthan Award in 2011 and 2012, which is handed out by the Ministry of Irrigation of Maharashtra. Lakshmi did not even qualify for the competition, because it had a backlog of charges to recover from farmers- of around one and half lakh. Also, Lakshmi does not publish a proper annual report, nor does it have a well-maintained library, nor keep comprehensive financial or administrative records. However, in the eyes of the villagers, Lakshmi is favoured because it is regarded as the most efficient WUA in the village. In recent times, complaints about Parvati have been made by farmers, despite Parvati's being a recipient of the prestigious award.

This reveals interesting perspectives about what constitutes the 'success' of a WUA. It is important to note the difference in terms of how 'success' of the policy is measured and perceived by the different actors involved in the process and implementation of the policy. It can be argued that producing 'success' is a joint effort, performed by the farmers and employees at the WUA, under the guidance of the employees of the Irrigation Department. The employees of the WUA ensure they have completed all the official records and other documents necessary to qualify as a successful WUA. For example, they will compile a record book of the monthly and annual meetings, but they might sign against the name of any members who did not attend. Also, as described earlier, they might produce an annual report in booklet form. In this manner, the official records are not exactly maintained but rather, they are manufactured by the WUA employees in order to claim the status of a successful WUA. However, many of the farmers do not perceive the success

of the WUA through the production of these documents or *tamcham* (which is a Marathi word for the WUA office set-up), but, rather, according to whether their crops are water properly, and whether water is available. In this respect, adequate water availability is the most important factor relating to why Lakshmi is thought of as more successful than Parvati, in the eyes of the farmers.

2. Size and Membership

In terms of both the size of the command area and the number of members, Parvati is larger than Lakshmi. Parvati covers an area of 1,600 acres with a membership of around 1,300 members, while Lakshmi covers an area of around 500 acres with a membership of 200 to 300 farmers. I found that the farmers at Parvati often praise the functioning of the Lakshmi WUA as being more efficient in terms of the management of water. In fact, it seems that the size of a WUA is what matters in relation to its effective functioning. The smaller the size of the command area, the easier it is to manage employees, as well as the flow of water in the area. Secondly, there is less wasting of water in terms of transportation over a larger area. Thirdly, a larger command area affects the water pressure required to water the crops.

3. The Composition of the Committee Members

Unlike Parvati, where there is a strong domination of the Marathas in the Association, Lakshmi has more participation from non-dominant castes, such as the Mali farmers. Another difference between the two WUAs is the composition of its committee members. The Committee at Parvati seems to be stronger than the one at Saptsrungi, and this is mainly due to the backing it receives from Nandu Patil, the former head of the village of Panchayat, and a prominent local leader in Taluka level politics. Nandu's support of the Parvati WUA derives from the fact that most of the land belonging to the Patil family is located in the Parvati command area. As well, the leaders of this WUA, such as Shriam, Sudham, Suresh, and the younger leaders, such as Prabhakar Patil, are influential members in village politics.

This political back-up at Parvati helps the WUA to maintain a good relationship with the Irrigation Department, as well as helping to effectively manage the administration of the WUA in the form of negotiating with the Irrigation Department. For example, helping to negotiate instances where the WUA needs more water than its prescribed quota in order to meet the demands of the farmers in the area. In this situation, the employees approach the Irrigation Department through these channels of influence, and the Department then considers their needs, and decides whether or not to provide more water to meet their required demands. This process is often carried out informally amongst the WUA and the employees of the Irrigation Department. In my observations, I found that Parvati was always in need of extra water.

Lakshmi is influenced and led by prominent villagers, such as Nana Patil and Tidke, who are active in the non-ruling party, Shiv Sena, and who have been in their positions in the opposition party for the last decade. Therefore, the irrigation bureaucracy has been less likely to entertain the demands made by the leaders of the Lakshmi WUA. Bajirao Patil has been the representative of the village at Project Level Association (PLA) for a while, and holds an influential position in the PLA. According to the members of the Pawar family, Yashwantrao never contests his election in the PLA in order to maintain stability. However, these conditions will change soon, because Nana assumed the position of Head of the Village of Panchayat at the 2012 elections, and has been a member of Zilla Parishad since 2013.

The competition between the dominant leaders to acquire the top position in the PLA also has to do with gaining access to PLA resources, such as a computer, printing facilities, and a car; and these resources are used to increase the post-holders' influence among other farmers. For the PLA, having a leader from Panchayat on the Managing Committee makes it easier for the PLA to share office resources with Panchayat. For example, when Bajirao was the Head of Panchayat, he offered the PLA a former primary school building in Rampur to use as an office. The rent paid by the WUA to Panchayat was a nominal amount. Similarly, this arrangement helps the WUA to mobilise

farmers for a function or event. Therefore, both the PLA, as well as Panchayat, maintain a mutually supportive arrangement.

4. The Participation of Women and Dalit Farmers

As stated earlier, in Lakshmi there is no participation by women in the affairs of the WUA, whereas the participation of women at Parvati amounts only to a form of symbolism. In Parvati, male committee members ensure that the women of the committee show a nominal presence at meetings. My view is that they do this in order to give the impression of female participation in the WUA, although this is not the case in reality. For the rest of the year, I saw hardly any women attending any of the meetings at Parvati.

One of the reasons behind this minimal participation of women might be due to the 'cultural sanctity' attached to women's presence in the public sphere, especially among the dominant caste, Marathas. Shobha Patil, who belongs to the dominant Maratha caste, hardly ever attended any meetings organised by the Parvati WUA. At each of the meetings, her husband attended in her place, and conducted affairs in her name. The sanctity attached to the presence of the two other women in terms of female presence in the public sphere appeared to be less, which might be due to their age.

Hausabai is in her forties, and belongs to the Adivasi family, while Kusumbai is in her fifties, and belongs to the Pawar family. Kusumbai is a single woman with a young boy. I saw that, according to Indian cultural tradition, there was a strong sense of 'sanctity' attached to the presence of the younger, married woman, especially because she is from a dominant caste.

Another reason why there is a lack of participation by women might be due to the fact that women have very limited access to property and land in India. Usually, property and land is passed down from father to son in a patriarchal manner, and, therefore, few women are landowners. In the case of Hausabai, her position is fairly unique. In Indian culture, Kusumbai's age and economic position demands a certain amount of respect among members of the WUA.

5. Intimacy with the local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and Bureaucracy

At both WUAs, the focus of attention from the NGO to the bureaucracy of the Irrigation Department appears to have shifted from the WUA to PLA. However, at a superficial level, the NGO and the Irrigation Department still maintain relationships with both WUAs- but this is more apparent at Parvati. The NGO maintain relations with Parvati mainly because it wishes to identify a WUA in the area that demonstrates the success and efficiency of the entire WUA project. I found that the DY sub-minor of Parvati, along the main Rampur-Nashik Road, is a favourite site of the NGO and the Irrigation Department. It is used as a show-piece for visitors to the Mahabalipur Dam, in order to highlight the successful distribution of water through the proper channels. Using this site, the NGO and the Irrigation Department impart the idea of success to visitors. Therefore, in order to make these visits successful, and to avoid any laxity on the part of the Parvati WUA and the farmers surrounding the site, the NGO maintains a good relationship with the employees at Parvati. It can be remarked upon that this favour is returned, because Parvati is always allowed to exceed its water limits.

Therefore, more intimacy is shared between the bureaucracy and Parvati than between the bureaucracy and Lakshmi. Another reason for the choice of Parvati over Lakshmi may be due to the presence of strong and influential dominant-caste farmers on the board of Parvati. Therefore, in order to achieve the wider goals of making the policy successful in the area, the bureaucracy of the NGO and the Irrigation Department strive to maintain good relationships with employees and members at Parvati. In this respect, Lakshmi receives less attention in comparison to Parvati.

6. The behaviour of the WUA employees towards members of the WUA

I found significant differences between the behaviour of WUA employees towards their members at both WUAs. At Parvati, the Secretary maintains a formal and authoritarian stance towards the members, whereas, at Saptsrungi, the Secretary maintains a friendly approach towards members. Also, I noted

that employees at Parvati- especially the Secretary and the Clerk- treat members of the middle castes in an indifferent and irreverent manner, and the behaviour shown and the language used by the farmers towards the employees resembles an appeal and a request, rather than a demand. I observed that farmers, especially those with smaller landholdings, and those who are migrants, do not challenge the employees at Parvati to ensure they maintain access to irrigation water. Rather, these farmers behave in a very polite and complimentary manner towards the Parvati employees, and the farmers appear to be very dependent on the employees at the WUA. This dependency is somewhat responsible for making the employees inaccessible to the farmers in terms of accountability and transparency. This is especially true for small landholding and non-dominant caste farmers in the area. The inaccessibility of the employees to smaller landholding farmers and non-dominant caste farmers is more apparent at Parvati than at Lakshmi.

I concluded that there are two main reasons for these differences in behaviour. Firstly, the distinction speaks to the social and economic differences between the employees who run Parvati, and the employees who run the Lakshmi WUA. As stated earlier, in Parvati, both Sanjeev and Santosh belong to the dominant Maratha family, and they are close relatives of Yashwantrao Pawar (the Head of the village). The Secretary at Parvati owns a substantial amount of farmland, and he cultivates different crops and fruits; economically, he is in a strong position in comparison to other members of the WUA in the village. Additionally, the Clerk at Parvati WUA runs a stationery shop, and cultivates crops on a small piece of land. The Clerk manages to sustain both the shop and his farm by receiving financial help from the Secretary at Parvati WUA, and the support of Yashwantrao Pawar. Therefore, unlike the Secretary at Saptsrungi, both the Secretary and the Clerk at Parvati do not exclusively depend on the salary provided to them by the WUA. The Secretary of Lakshmi WUA maintains a family of six- including his father and mother- on a meagre income generated from his farmland, his father's pension, and his salary from the WUA. I found that economic ties and social inter-dependencies are maintained between individuals belonging to the same dominant caste group, and this strongly influences their behaviour.

In order to maintain his position, The Secretary of Lakshmi tries to maintain good relationships with the farmer members of his WUA. The relationships shared by the Secretaries of the two WUAs with their farmers reveal two things: firstly, it conveys to us the extent of the social and economic dependency that the employees have on the farmers, and, secondly, the political dynamics of relationships within the village. At Lakshmi, the Secretary lacks both political support and strong economic support, and so he has to be accountable to and responsive towards the demands of the farmers. On the other hand, the Secretary of the Parvati is economically strong, and enjoys strong political support, and, as such, is less responsive to the demands of the farmers. This economic and political strength reduces the pressure on WUA employees to be accountable and responsive to the Managing Committee, as well as to the farmers. The Secretary at Parvati, unlike the Secretary of Lakshmi, can resign at any time, or give up the job if he finds it too difficult to cope with the expectations of the committee members and the farmers.

On one level, it can be seen that the Secretaries at both Parvati and Lakshmi share the same attitudes relating to caste, and this is demonstrated by their behaviour towards non-dominant caste members. This is displayed in the attitude of the Secretary when he makes fun of the farmers, and scolds them for their misuse of water. Employees and committee members at the WUAs occupy a respectable and powerful position amongst the farmers. I observed that employing locals at the WUA is advantageous for the functioning of the WUA, but it has disadvantages for the farmers, who experience inequity and a lack of fairness.

These local employees have been helpful in the effective functioning of the WUAs, because they know the people and the area very well. However, this situation also works to create a defined social hierarchy in the village, and creates distance between the smaller farmers and the employees of the WUA. Furthermore, the smaller farmers are unable to utilise the language of rights in order to lobby for access to irrigation water, in spite of the fact that this is supposed to be ensured by WUA policy. Instead, it can be seen that the

smaller farmers, and especially the migrant farmers, have to negotiate with WUA employees about access to irrigation water. The politics of negotiation will be explored later in the chapter entitled ‘Caste, Class, Migrants and WUAs: Understanding and Analysing the Farmers’ Discourse’.

In a nutshell, local administrative governance serves to sustain existing local structures (both social and political) by allowing the language of negotiation, rather than that of rights, to prevail when dealing with the smaller farmers.

6.9.2 Similarities

1. The Formation of the WUA and the Leadership

It is evident that the leadership of the founding members of both WUAs was derived from the small and medium sized landowners in the area, but the substantive committee leadership that later emerged was drawn from the pool of large landowning farmers, who belong to the upper castes. The best co-ordinators and administrators seem to emerge from the middle castes, such as the Mali, whilst leadership emerges from the upper castes, especially from the Maratha caste members. This situation is related to tradition, and to the historical role that was played by the Marathas as large landowning rulers during the 18th century. The Marathas can trace their lineage to Shivaji Maharaj (a Maratha King who ruled southern Maharashtra). The pride of being related to Shivaji is showcased on a daily basis by the Maratha farmers. Indeed, even the Patil family boasts that their old house, which is situated in the centre of the village, once hosted Shivaji Maharaj during his expedition to Northern Maharashtra. Secondly, the Maratha’s share of the land in the village is greater than that held by other caste communities. These factors visibly mark the Marathas as an important community who should be taken seriously by the Irrigation Department and the local NGO.

The historical role of caste and the material benefits acquired from it in terms of land continues to dominate politics in the village, and the operation of WUAs in the area. This domination is maintained and enforced by the Marathas party through their leadership of the WUAs. WUAs give them a

platform to negate the contribution made to village life by other caste groups, relating to work carried out by WUAs. The Marathas try to place continued emphasis on the role of the founding members of the WUAs who belonged to their caste. In this way, the Marathas are able to re-write history in order to exaggerate their contribution to the formation of the WUAs, and to reduce the role played by other caste members in the village. This enables them to maintain the privileges they enjoy in the village and to claim a superior position in the development process and village politics. Secondly, the political and familial rivalry between the two dominant caste families has been introduced into the domain of the WUAs, where competition and rivalry between the two families is evident. This rivalry spills over into political activity that is practiced in the village: whereas the Lakshmi WUA is led by Nana Patil, who represents Shiv Sena, the Parvati WUA is led by Bajirao Patil, who represents the National Congress Party (NCP). The performance of the respective leaders in the WUAs has also become a factor that influences the local Panchayat elections held in the village.

6.10 Conclusion

Traditionally in the area, it was the control and ownership of land that defined the power held by a family within the village. However, in the modern age, control and dominance within the domain of the WUAs is a new vehicle through which the dominant families in the village contest their claims to prominence. The dominant families seem to be in competition to control the source of water in order to try to enhance their position within village politics. In addition to this, land ownership still plays an important role in power politics in the village.

Secondly, the operation of WUAs, in reality, challenges the claims made by neo-liberal reformers, who argue that the market is a platform that can be used to establish and promote equal treatment within its structure. Neo-liberals argue that the market ignores the social position of individuals who take part in it, and that the market treats customers equally, based purely on their capacity to pay (Chandrashekhar and Ghosh, 2004). However, my research has demonstrated that the agenda of the commodification of water has not

been able to override pre-existing social and economic differences among farmers. This draws our attention to the concept of 'embeddedness', as suggested by Polanyi (1944). Polanyi argues that, in non-economic societies, there are no marked divisions in the economic and social sphere, and activities of 'provisioning' are 'embedded' in the networks of social relationships- such as kinship, and religious groups among the people (Polanyi, 1944). My study of the two WUAs shows that, in spite of claims made that neo-liberalism works to 'dis-embed' the economy from the social sphere by means of market reforms, these reforms have not affected the ways that communities are regulated. In fact, my study shows that economic transactions are still regulated by existing social institutions.

Therefore, rather than challenging or transforming traditional structures of power, neo-liberal processes have strengthened traditional structures of power in the village. The water reforms have given little or no space for the marginalised groups to increase their access to irrigation water. The idea of participatory governance through WUAs appears to sustain existing social relationships among the different actors involved in the project, and the notion of 'participation' is a form of symbolism used by the dominant actors to encourage the acceptability of the policy in the larger social domain. In reality, the policy continues to sustain and strengthen existing caste and class relations amongst participants in the WUAs. This is evident from the behaviour of the WUA employees, and from the actions of the Committee members when they strive to resolve conflicts among the farmers.

Lastly, it must be noted that the realisation of empowerment largely depends on who is being empowered, and by whom. The WUAs rely on the Irrigation Department and the NGO to receive favours and grants that are sanctioned for different development projects. However, in the eyes of the villages, the local NGO and the Irrigation Department are outsiders who sometimes lack credibility. Therefore, the NGO and the Irrigation Department are always looking for support from the dominant-caste farmers in order to achieve acceptability, and to gather support among the villagers to successfully implement their policies. Similarly, the local NGO is in competition with other

NGOs in the development market, which drives them to enter into negotiations with the dominant farmers in order to implement a 'successful' scheme. The drive for NGOs to make these projects 'successful' reduces the revolutionary zeal of the organisation to make changes in the interests of the farmers. The NGOs find it more convenient to accept, rather than to challenge and change, social and economic structures.

Essentially, the perceived 'success' of a WUA is the result of co-ordinated work between the dominant farmers, the NGOs, and the irrigation bureaucracy, rather than a result by means of participation from small and medium landholding farmers in the area.

Chapter-7

Caste, Class, Migrants and WUAs: Understanding and analysing the process of Water Distribution by WUAs

7.1 Introduction

This chapter argues that presence of water conflicts in the command area highlights that the idea of participation and cooperation among the farmers sustaining WUAs is not actualised in practice. Rather, the process of arbitration of justice by the rich and dominant farmers legitimises their position as the dominant castes, thereby sustaining their power and influence in the village.

The idea of farmer cooperation, on which WUAs sustains themselves, is a process of asymmetrical gain, where the dominant and rich farmers benefit and the small farmers, especially those who lack the means to build up their networks among the WUA, lose. It brings to our attention the way both large and small landowning farmers use different strategies to maintain their access to irrigation water. Simultaneously, it shows the way farmers perceive the process of the commodification of water in terms of increasing the cost of irrigation, and the way it affects the small farmer's options in terms of livelihood and crop cultivation.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that participation is a tyranny, in the sense that it does not challenge the existing social norms or economic structures, and privileges the dominant and powerful in the process. However, despite this, it is not about absolute domination, and there is space for negotiation from those who are less powerful. However, as seen in the case studies, the farmers' capability to negotiate is not independent of the caste and class structures in the village. In the process, the farmers- especially farmers from the Dalit community, who lack both the social, as well as the economic capital- fall behind in the race to negotiate their access to irrigation water. In a way, the

process of negotiation is also asymmetric, and is defined more so by an individual's caste and class position. The conflicts also depicts the way that two WUAs function in terms of resolving the conflicts among the farmers, and what factors determine the capability of a WUA to resolve the conflict in the command area. I will explore the extent to which the institution operates as a vehicle for resolving conflicts between farmers (Pranjape, 2008).

Evidence presented in this chapter will include case studies of conflicts between farmers in the command area of both Parvati WUA, and Lakshmi WUA. These case studies will explore the extent to which factors such as caste, class, status, and migration affect the farmers' access to irrigation water. This evidence comprises informal interviews with farmers, and observations carried out during field-work. These case studies will challenge the image of success presented by the WUA.

The chapter is divided into three sections, which elaborate on the case studies, depicting the conditions that gave rise to water conflicts among the farmers (7.2), and analyse these conflicts by comparing case studies, and understanding the way two WUAs functions differently in the command area (7.3). Lastly, the conclusion sums up the argument of the chapter (7.4).

7.2 Distribution and Access to Water: Understanding the water conflicts in the command area of Parvati and Lakshmi WUAs.

This section presents the case study of different water conflicts existing amongst the farmers in the command area of both the Parvati WUA, as well as the Lakshmi WUA. These conflicts usually concern what are known as 'field channels'. Whenever I was advised of a conflict about water distribution in the village, I visited the area and the farms concerned. Some of these conflicts are of a permanent nature, where the small farmers involved in the conflict have either given up their claim, or opt to find an alternative source to continue to have access to irrigation water. While, in the case of other conflicts, there are differences owing to delays in the supply of water among the farmers that arise during water distribution period. These conflicts explore the farmers' opinions about the functioning of the WUAs, and the distribution of water

within their command area. The opinion expressed by the farmers reflects their caste and class status. Also, some of the farmers conducting their work in the village are migrant farmers from other regions.

7.2.1 Water Conflicts in the Parvati WUA command area

(i) Conflict 1 - Suresh Morey (At the Tail End of Parvati WUA)

My first visit was to Rajaram Phule (Rama)'s farm. He was in conflict with a large landowning farmer called Suresh Morey (who belongs to the dominant Maratha caste, and is generally viewed as a troublemaker by smaller farmers in the area). Rajaram is a small landholding farmer, who belongs to the Mali caste. He is in his early forties and is currently the President of the Mali Association in the village. Rajaram is classed as a small holding farmer only in terms of land size, because he owns just four acres. However, he has built Poly Houses worth 1.5 to 2 million rupees to cultivate roses. He built his Poly House by obtaining a private bank loan. On his remaining land, he cultivates vegetables, and in recent years he has started to cultivate grapes as well. His farm lies immediately next to Suresh's farm. The specificity of this conflict is that it illustrates the way big farmers, owing to caste domination are able to restrain the small farmers who belong to the middle-caste, and deny them access to irrigation water (for a map of the Conflicts in Command area of Parvati WUA, refer to Appendix Six).

Suresh is one of the biggest landowning farmers in the entire Nashik region, and he belongs to the Maratha caste. Suresh owns around 60 to 70 acres of land, and he cultivates grapes of export quality. He has received many awards for being one of the most successful cultivators of grapes at state level. He lives with his family in a traditional 'joint family' arrangement, where all the members of one family live together in a house. Suresh's brothers and cousins look after the practical day-to-day management of the farm, while Suresh looks after affairs outside of the farm. This 'joint family' arrangement has contributed to Suresh and his family's significant prosperity. Additionally, his family owns a processing and packaging centre, known as Eknath Agro Products, and a dairy milk business that supplies milk to nearby villages, and

to Gujarat (a neighbouring state). After the Patil and the Pawar families, the Morey are the third most dominant family in the village.

About three years ago, Suresh decided to close down the field channel that provided neighbouring farmers with access to irrigation water. Suresh gave two reasons for closing the field channel: first, the water flowing through it carries away the soil of his grape-cultivating farm, and, secondly, excess amounts of water affect the quality of the grapes. This created a huge problem for other farmers, especially for the small landholding famers, some of whom now have to rely completely on rain and well water for the cultivation of their crops. One of the farmers affected by the closing of the field channel was Rajaram Phule.

Both Rajaram and Suresh used to share water through the field channel. However, according to Rajaram, around three to four years ago, there was a debate between the two farmers over the field channel. Suresh complained that the water that passed continuously through his land affected his land quality, and would eventually affect the quality of his grapes. Therefore, he closed down the field channel and extended his grape-growing area, and, in the process, took over the land allotted for the field channel. According to norms of the WUAs, no member can close down the field channel abruptly, and one needs to provide a valid justification for closure. In the event that the WUA committee is satisfied with the justification of the member, the member has to ensure that he constructs an alternative field channel, in order to maintain other farmers' access to irrigation water. Despite these requirements, however, Suresh did not follow the norm, and did not provide an alternative way for the field channel. The closing down of the field channel created a water access problem for his neighbours, especially Rajaram. Although Rama repeatedly requested that Suresh allow irrigation water to pass through the field channel, Suresh never complied. Finally, in response to Suresh's stance, Rajaram closed down Suresh's pathway through the land that connected Suresh's farmland in the area. Therefore, Suresh was left with no alternative but to create another path to reach his land.

This entire conflict became the subject of much debate among local farmers. Suresh's decision to close the field channel severely affected all of the farmers in the surrounding area. Most of these farmers are small farmers, who belong to the Mali caste, and cultivate roses. Rajaram approached the Committee of the Parvati WUA to resolve the matter, but the Committee decided to support Suresh rather than the small farmers. According to Rajaram, the WUA committee members made a special effort to provide a new in-road for Suresh's farm, so that he could continue his business of grape production.

Another small farmer in the same patch of land near Suresh's is Govind Phule, who was also affected by the closing down of the field channel. Govind is a small farmer who owns 0.75 acres, which is a very small landholding in the area. He cultivates flowers such as roses and marigolds. He and his wife, son and daughter live on their farm in a small house comprising two rooms that is constructed out of metal plates. Owing to a lack of access to irrigation water due to closing of the field channel by Suresh Klumar, Govind was forced to move to his bore for water.

I met Govind one afternoon at the Sonawane Shop, where he came to buy pesticides for his crops. At first, Govind confused my role as a researcher with that of an expert on pesticides and insecticides. Eventually, after an hour, Govind decided to leave because he thought that the amount of time he had spent talking to me would annoy his wife. However, as he was leaving, he realised that I was working on a study of the WUAs in the village, and so he stopped and talked with me for another hour and a half. During this discussion, he said that he felt a grave injustice had been carried out by the WUAs against the small farmers. According to Govind, "because of a few farmers that can be counted on one hand, a lot of farmers have been affected by them". Also he said that:

"In a particular area, one farmer is able to dominate ten farmers, owing to the appropriation of the land required for the field channel. The big farmer will appropriate the land left in order to construct [a] field channel for their grape farms. However, no one in the WUA, not even the Chairman and other committee members, will say a word against him. There is [a] continuous

chain of people whose interests converge with each other, starting from the WUA committee members to the irrigation officers. The big farmers offer tea to the officers and ensure that the matter is not carried outside of the office.” (Interview with Govind Phule, small farmer, Rampur, 29-08-12).

Govind informed me that the affected farmers wanted to construct their own field channel using their own money, but the WUA did not support this decision. Also, it emerged that, generally, the WUA committee members have not been able to retain some of the field channels constructed by the irrigation department. Govind feels that irrigation officers should take the time to meet with the farmers themselves, rather than just visiting the WUA offices to liaise with members of the Patil family and the WUA Committee. Govind feels that there is corruption in the Association. He said, “...the moment water is released by the WUA in the village, you will find all the committee members and the staff of the WUA having drinks and food at the hotels in the nearby town.” I have heard similar stories about the use of hotels from other small farmers in the village.

The small farmers perceive corruption in the WUA system. Govind said that corruption was previously carried out by and through the Irrigation Department directly with farmers; now, however, informal networks and personal relationships organised through the WUA are far more important in the dissemination of corruption. According to Govind, “the day the WUAs started functioning (which according to him was six to seven years earlier) farmers stopped getting water.” Furthermore, he said that, “*During the days of irrigation management, it was easy for the farmers to offer a bribe to the water man to divert water to his farm. But in the times of the WUA it is not easy to offer bribe to the staff owing to local relations of domination of caste and village politics.*” (Interview with Govind Phule, small farmer, Rampur, 29-08-12). It means that the corruption has not stopped: rather, its forms have changed over the time.

This situation has caused significant difficulties for smaller farmers, who are not able to get an adequate amount of water for their crops.

(ii) Conflict 2: Motiram Patil (In the Middle Part of the Parvati Command Area)

This water conflict depicts that differences among the farmers over the field channel do not exist merely on the lines of caste and class, but also among the members of the same family. In this case, a medium Maratha farmer called Motiram Patil, the owner of between 10 and 15 acres of land, closed down a field channel passing through his field, which was serving the nearby small farmers. Motiram is a medium grapes-cultivating farmer, who has a good influence in the village politics. Three years ago, i.e. in 2009, Motiram closed down the field channel, stating that the water passing through his land affects the quality of the grapes. Among the small farmers affected was an old farmer in his seventies named Baba Patil. He lives with his wife, next to Motiram's farmhouse. The old couple own around half an acre of land, half of which is cultivated by a younger brother. When the field channel was closed down, the couple were forced to use well irrigation. According to Baba, Motiram built his farmhouse over the field channel passing through his field, and he promised the nearby farmers and the WUA that he would build a new field channel. However, he later withdrew his offer, claiming that the new flow of water would affect his soil and, therefore, the quality of his grapes. Many farmers ran out of water during the summer, but the Association did not take any action against Motiram, even though other farmers in the area no longer had access to irrigation water.

In the surrounding area, I met with other farmers affected by the closure of the field channel. One of them was Satish Mandalik, a tail-end farmer in the Parvati WUA. He belongs to an OBC category caste, but he is not a Maratha. His family owns 2.5 acres of land, and his father is employed at Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). His brother also works at HAL. According to Satish Mandalik, the elder son, they have not had access to water for a long time. He said that the reason is due to the closure of the field channel by Motiram in the upper region of the stream. Mandalik's family and the other farmers have approached the WUA about this issue without any success.

Satish feels that the issue runs deeper than just the mismanagement of water in the village, and that the problems relate to Maratha domination in the village:

“The village is dominated by the Maratha population. The Maratha population is not only dominant irrespective of which WUA you are talking about in the village, but they also dominate other important institutions such as the co-operative society, and the banking society, etc. Therefore it’s possible for the caste members of the Marathas to manage the water system. In both the WUAs (i. e Parvati and Lakshmi) we will find that power is held by the dominant caste groups in the village.” (Interview with Satish Mandalik, small farmer, Rampur, 02-06-12).

In a way, Mandalik’s statements about the domination of the Marathas, do not, to me, appear completely true, owing to my observations. I would opine that, unlike the Navanth, the domination of Maratha in Lakshmi is not absolute, and the Mali farmers do have a say in the process of decision making. Mandalik used to cultivate grapes but, owing to a lack of water, he now cultivates vegetables, such as grout. Mandalik says that ten years ago, water used to be abundant during the irrigation season, and the family had access to wells. However, eventually, owing to growing water scarcity and the unevenness of rainfall, they were forced to use water supplied from the WUA. According to Satish, bringing this water down to their farm was a complicated and difficult process, noting that, “it was like bringing out a goat from the mouth of tiger.” However, the Maratha farmers began to regularly break the field channel, which Satish would always have to fix. Fixing it became a time-consuming and hectic process, and owing to the stress and labour involved in fixing the channel, he stopped taking water from the dam. In his opinion, his family is not the only family in the village that has not benefited from the formation of WUAs. He feels there are many other families that have suffered water deprivation. In other words, Satish has noticed the hegemony of the dominant-caste farmers, and feels the need to challenge and resist them. However, he thinks that this domination remains unchallenged due to the lack of strong leadership among the other caste groups in the village.

Another farmer, Subhas Patil, tells us about the way class relations affects farmers' access to irrigation water. Subhas, who owns one and half acres of land in the area, was also affected by the closure of the same field channel. He believes that the farmers in the upper region closed it down because they wanted to use the land to expand the cultivation of their grapes. In his opinion, the WUA does not bother to take care of the small farmers affected by this issue.

Other farmers affected by this issue include Laxman Govardhan and Rajan Thorat, which shows us the way farmers negotiate their access to irrigation water. . The former is a small landholding farmer belonging to the Mali caste, who owns a Poly House covering half an acre, and one acre of land, where he cultivates roses. The latter belongs to the Maratha caste, and he cultivates grapes, in addition to owning a shop that sells fertilizer and pesticides within the village. Both families maintain their access to irrigation water by asking the Association to deposit their share of water in the well of a neighbouring farmer. They then pump water out with an electric motor, and take it through a pipeline connected to their fields. Both of the farmers feel that this solution is better than having no water at all, but in this endeavour they are totally dependent on the whims and fancies of their neighbouring farmer. Additionally, their neighbour is free to withdraw their supply of water from his well at any time. Therefore, these farmers also feel that the local WUA does not serve their needs, and they are dissatisfied with the inefficiency of water management in their area. As well, they are dissatisfied with the lack of maintenance of the field channels and canals in their area, and the constant waste of water. Both farmers complained about the lack of interest within the Association to respond to farmers' requests, especially if they relate to conflicts over field channels. Also, they share negative opinions about the accountability and transparency of the Association, mainly because they are rarely informed about meetings that take place within the WUA.

In spite of their complaints, both Laxman (belonging to Mali caste) and Rajan (belonging to Maratha caste) strive to maintain good relationships with their local WUA. I observed this endeavour in the way that Laxman helped the

Clerk of the Parvati Association to purchase a second-hand car so that he could start a local transport business. It is very difficult to understand how this seemingly dysfunctional relationship works because, although Laxman has valid reasons for not trusting the WUA, he is friendly with the Clerk, and they share jokes amongst themselves. Eventually, I discovered that it is very difficult to hold grudges with people in the village for a significant amount of time, due to the need to make compromises in order to carry out everyday life.

Other farmers near Motiram who are affected by the conflict include Chintu Govardhan, Vishal Khode, and others who belong to the Mali caste. The example of these farmers shows the way middle-caste farmers look at the domination of the Maratha in the WUAs. This group of farmers own Poly Houses, and they cultivate roses. However, they also own a small patch of land for cultivating vegetables, and other open-air flowers such as marigolds. This group is comprised of three to four Mali farmers and, at one point, they made a collective effort to bring down water from the nearby village through a pipeline. However, due to group differences, they closed the pipeline. Now, they depend on rain and well water exclusively to cultivate their roses. Chintu is a farmer in his sixties, and he expressed strong feelings against the inability of the WUA to provide irrigation water to the Mali farmers. In his opinion, due to the lack of proper field channels, most of the irrigation water provided by the WUA runs all the way down the road, rather than into the fields of the farmers. He feels that the reason for this mismanagement of water is due to politics involving the dominant Maratha caste, who seek to continue their domination of the village.

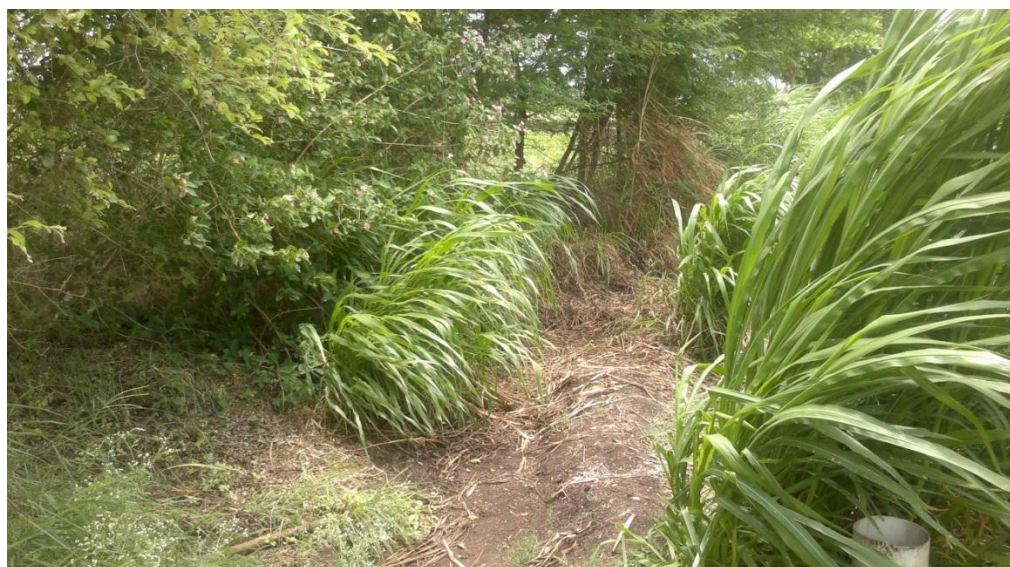
(iii) Conflict 3: Krishna Patil (At the Tail-End of Parvati Command Area)

This is a conflict existing amongst the Maratha farmers and the Adivasi farmers, where it is evident that the dependency of Adivasi farmers on the dominant-caste farmers prohibits them from putting up a strong resistance against the dominant-caste farmers. In this conflict, Krishna Patil, a medium farmer belonging to the Maratha caste, has taken over the occupation of a field channel in order to cultivate long grass for his livestock. This has denied other

local farmers, Chauagul and Gaikwad (who are Adivasi farmers in the area), access to irrigation water.

The younger son of Chauagul (Sham) described the challenges faced by trying to depend entirely on rain-water for watering food crops. He showed me the original field channel that is now used for a long grass crop. Sham told me that, in recent years, owing to the growing demand for milk in the market, some farmers decided to diversify into the dairy business, in order to secure an additional source of income for their families. Therefore, in order to maintain their livestock, some farmers started to use their land to cultivate grass. However, rather than using his main area of land, Krishna decided to occupy the land allotted for the field channel in order to grow grass. This was to ensure he could continue cultivating grapes on other parts of his land.

Image 11: The grass cultivated along the field channel blocking the flow of irrigation water.



Together with other farmers Sham repeatedly asked Krishna to provide alternative access to water; however, Krishna always ignored his requests. Furthermore, the WUA have refused to intervene in the conflict, saying that it is an issue between the farmers themselves, and, therefore, it should be resolved privately. As a result, the families of Chauagul and Gaikwad farmers

were left with no other alternative but to rely on rain-water, and the water available from the well, to sustain their crops during summer.

After I spoke to Sham, I met the Head of another Adivasi family, Ashok Gaikwad, who is a small holding farmer in his fifties, and who lives together with his family. His family owns around one and a half acres of land close to Cahugul's land. The whole family works as agricultural labourers; mostly under the Bhatia system, where the cost of production is shared between the owner of the land and the tenant. They regularly work on land belonging to Vinayak Patil, a large landholder, and they cultivate vegetables such as spinach, coriander and tomatoes, or, in winter, crops such as wheat and maize. When the Association first started, Ashok's family would receive water regularly. However, eventually, over a period of time, as the cultivation of grapes increased in the area, the farmers demanded more water and land for the grapes. The large farmers found it hard to rely on the amount and availability of the irrigation water provided by the irrigation department and so, in order to get access to more water, decided to construct pipelines to withdraw water made available by the Palkhed dam, or wells in the nearby villages. As a result, these large landowning farmers, in a way, became independent of the WUA (although this does not mean that they completely stopped taking water from the WUA), and lost interest in helping to maintain the field channels that passed through their land. When I asked him how he felt about this, Ashok replied:

"The society [WUA] says that you should construct your own channels, and they will push water through them. But trying to construct these channels has caused fights between the farmers. Therefore, in order to avoid conflict, we decided to use well water, but we need to make sure there is enough water available in our wells." (Interview with Ashok Gaikwad, small farmer, Rampur, 29-06-12).

According to Ashok, both the committee members and the large farmers belong to the same *bhaitakh*, (i.e. 'caste group'), and they regularly meet up in order to discuss water distribution. It is easy for the large farmers to convince WUA committee members to take into consideration the interest of their caste

group, whereas the other caste farmers find it uncomfortable to build up such relations with the WUA committee members. Therefore, conflicts cannot be adequately resolved as long the dominant caste members continue to run the Association in this way. Also, Ashok notes that the Association does not have any interest in supporting the only two Adivasi families in the area who are surrounded by Maratha farmers. Ashok said, “All they do is look after their stomach”¹, and as such, they avoid getting into a conflict with the Maratha farmers. According to Ashok, relations of dependency of the Adivasi farmers on the Maratha farmers in terms of contract labour and contract farming compel them to not to indulge in conflict with the Maratha farmers.

(iv) Conflict 4: The Farmers of Phule Wadi (In the Upstream Area of Parvati Command Area)

The conflicts described below highlight the way caste differences amongst the farmers’ affect one’s access to irrigation water, even in the upstream area, which is normally considered to be good in terms of its location, which is close to the main canal and its availability of water. The upstream region comprises a hilly terrain, with farmland spread randomly across the outlet of the canal. It is generally believed that upstream areas have better access to irrigation water because of their location. However, during an informal group discussion in June 2012, the farmers of Phule Wadi (Wadi, meaning ‘area’; this is the area in upstream region of Navanth WUA mostly populated by famers belonging to the Phule family) told me they experienced an irregular supply of water from the WUA. During the winter, when the water charges are reduced, the Association delays the supply of water to their farms. Sometimes, they even omit a water rotation, and this causes deterioration of the crops. In the winter season it costs Rs 450 for three rotations, whilst in the summer season the charge is Rs 1200 for two water rotations. The farmers feel that this is one strategy used by the WUA in order to save water during the winter, for the purpose of selling it at a higher price during the summer (the charges usually rise up to four times the amount of the winter charges).

¹ The phrase ‘looking after the stomach’ is an expression used locally to express the idea of looking after oneself before anyone else.

The farmers said that the summer water charges are not affordable for smaller farmers, and the WUA usually sells summer water to large grape cultivators, who are able to pay the high charges. During this discussion, the small farmers said they thought the Association was biased in its allocation of irrigation water, and they felt that it was a profit-oriented institution. According to the annual reports of the WUAs, the association receives a good amount of money from the sale of water during the summer rotation from those who cultivate grapes. In fact, I remember an instance where the staff of the WUA mentioned that the WUA mostly runs on the profit earned by the sale of water during the summer season. From these discussions, it was evident that, in spite of living in the head region of the command area, these farmers experienced water shortages, and were not satisfied with the functioning of the WUA.

Dattu Zade is a small farmer who owns two and a half acres of land, and mostly cultivates crops (tomatoes, soya beans and wheat) with his younger brother. He relies on rainwater to hydrate his crops. Dattu lives in a small two-room farmhouse with a tin roof, together with his mother (who is in her seventies), his wife, his child, and his younger brother. He migrated to the area twelve years ago from the Nashik region. His cow supplies milk for family consumption, and is fed with waste produced on the farm, or with grass brought from the market during the summer. Dattu has a plan to start supplying milk to a local dairy as a source of income complementary to farming but, due to the limited availability of land in the area, and problems accessing irrigation water to cultivate grass, he does not have the enough resources to feed more than one cow.

The current water distribution pattern does not support his strategy to improve his livelihood. In fact, he told me that he regularly experiences water delays of one week. Also, he said:

“Irrespective of how much water gets stored in the dam, more or less, the situation remains the same. Even when you think there is enough water, you do not receive enough water. Nobody looks into the matter, and since we do not own substantial land, we have to be satisfied with what water we get.

Water does not reach the farmers, and this is the situation experienced by most of the farmers in the command area.” (Interview with Dattu Zade, small farmer, Rampur, in June 2012).

According to Dattu, the WUA employees always ensure that there is enough water to satisfy the needs of the rich farmers, and the rich farmers always receive their water on time. When I asked for more clarification, he told me about a farm located near his:

“This farmer is a rich grape-cultivating farmer. If he does not get water, he calls the WUA, and almost immediately he receives his share of water. This does not happen in our case, because we are poor farmers. The rich farmer is able to influence the WUA.² Almost in every field, there is an issue of corruption. You see if I have the power then I will give it to you (this means that when you have power you can exercise it over others). Today, if you look at any sector such as banking or the talathi (the local land registry), everywhere you will see corruption. In every sector, only if you have money will you get any work done. It is very unlikely that you can get your rightful share honestly.” (Interview with Dattu Zade, small farmer, Rampur, June 2012).

Dattu explained that large farmers usually exceed their water quota. This kind of negligence, which is discouraged by the Association using a fine system, is generally overlooked in the case of large farmers. Moreover, Dattu raised doubts about the accountability and transparency of the WUA. He claimed that it is not made clear how the revenue raised from charges or fines is actually spent. Dattu complained about the lack of transparency concerning water allocation, and about how much water actually travels through the dam. He claims that, although the Association should provide the equal distribution of resources, it allocates a higher share to grape crop cultivators, who are mostly medium and large landowning farmers, rather than to smaller wheat growing farmers:

² In local language this is known as *vajan* (weight or influence).

“The WUA gives only two to three rotations to wheat crop farmers, and it is not possible to cultivate wheat from these limited number of rotations, so farmers have to top up their water from a well. The quality of wheat usually depends on the quality of water obtained from the well.” (Interview with Dattu Zade, small farmer, Rampur, June 2012.)

I discovered that the assumption/rumour that farmers living in the upstream region are able to obtain more water is not true. I found that farmers living in the upstream region also experience discrimination according to caste and class divisions, and these elements determine access to irrigation water. This is evident from the experience of farmers from Phule Wadi, and that of other farmers living in the upstream region of Parvati WUA.

Rahul Govardhan is a Mali farmer who owns one and a half acres of land, and he shares the same opinion about the functioning of the WUA. Together with his family, he cultivates crops such as wheat and vegetables (tomatoes and coriander). He is provided with a limited amount of water for the cultivation of crops during the summer. Rahul told me about the lack of transparency in the functioning of the Association, and the unequal distribution of water in the command area. He told me that, even though he pays regular charges to the Association, he is not provided with an adequate amount of water. Furthermore, when he wanted to construct a small storage tank in his field to collect rain-water, the WUA refused permission. Rahul iterated that the WUA states that the storage tank would not be legal in the given area, due to its proximity to the main canal.

According to the provisions of the MMISF Act 2005, a tank or well cannot be used on the same area. The act envisages a distance of at least 3 meters between channels conveying water from wells. In response, Rahul challenged the approval given to a large landowning farmer for the construction of a water storage tank spreading over nearly half an acre, right next to the main canal. Rahul feels it is hard to understand the logic of the WUA's refusal of his request, and he believes that big landowning farmers are able to manipulate the system, and bend the rules to their convenience. When I asked him why he does not bring this matter to the notice of the WUA committee

members, he said that big farmers have their ‘own men’ in the Association. He said, *“The big farmers ensure that the WUA does not go against their interests. It’s all about politics and the position that the big farmers have in the village.”* (Interview with Rahul Govardhan, small farmer, Rampur, 04-06-12). Due to the refusal of his request, Rahul has developed a grudge against the WUA, and he sees no hope that the situation will change in the long term, in light of the growing corruption.

In the upstream area, some middle-caste farmers also suffer from a lack of water if they are not influential within the WUA. Roshan Vanaley belongs to the Dhangar caste, and lives with his wife, son and mother. He does not receive water on a regular basis, and by the time it is his turn, which is always at night, the WUA always provides a reduced amount of water. Both Roshan and his wife complained that, *“We always get our water at the last turn, and we never get a sufficient amount of water in spite of being located in the head region.”* (Interview with Roshan Vanaley, small farmer, Rampur, June, 2012.) However, they both agreed not to complain to the WUA out of fear that the WUA would not support them. Roshan informed me that he had now decided to give up trying to cultivate grapes, and had moved to cultivating vegetables, such as grout, instead, which need less water and economic investment. In fact, well water is really only suitable for vegetable crops, and not for grapes. It seems that Roshan is not interested in taking the matter further with the Association, and, he has decided to adapt his agricultural activities to the conditions of limited access to irrigation water.

(v) Conflict 5: Upstream Migrant Farmers

In this section, I elaborate on the experience of different farmers who purchased land in Rampur, and carry out their farming in the command area of Parvati and Lakshmi WUAs in the village. These farmers, as referred to in the context chapter, are called ‘Migrant’ farmers. Most of the farmers discussed below are located in the upstream area of the command area of the two WUAs. *The varied experience of these farmers shows the way migrant farmers maintain their access to irrigation water in the area.*

The first case study is of Rakesh Mauley, who is a Mali farmer and lives in the upstream area of Parvati WUA. He is in his forties, and moved to Rampur from Nashik a few years ago. Rakesh's father is a retired government servant. Using the money the family received from the sale of their land near the Nashik belt, and the money from the provident fund of his father, they purchased around five acres of land in Rampur. He has a well and a bore to sustain his crops. He cultivates wheat, flowers, tomatoes, and fruit, such as pomegranates. When I told Rakesh about my study, he asked me which farmers I had already met, and he asked if they were large or small landholding farmers. Like other small farmers, he complained about bias shown by the WUA in favour of rich farmers. Rakesh said that because he is not 'from this area', he finds himself in a powerless position when confronted by WUA bias. He said that other small farmers do not receive their water on time, but that the big farmers do, due to their influence in the area, and corruption. He said the bigger farmers always receive a continuous supply of water, and on a priority basis, from the WUA. Furthermore, he noted that, even though some of the big farmers do not have land within the control area, they can still influence the functioning of the Association.

Another farmer, named Prahalad Pallad, is a small farmer belonging to the Shepherd caste, and is located in the upstream area of Parvati WUA. He originally comes from a village named Ozar, which is nearly ten to twelve kilometres away from Rampur. Ozar has now developed into a town. During the time of development of the town area (which was almost ten years ago), the prices of the land around the town increased. According to Pallad, during that time, the government took the land of farmers for construction for some development project. The government paid the price of the land to the farmers according to the size of the land, and the crops cultivated by it. Pallad received a good amount of money in the deal, as he managed to show that he was cultivating fruits on his two acres of land, and was thus able to sanction a considerable amount of money for his land from the government authority. The amount he received from the government was used to purchase a bigger plot of land in the Rampur village. He has been farming in Rampur for the last ten to twelve years. He lives with his family, consisting of his wife, a son and

daughter-in-law, and two grandsons in a farmhouse built on his land. He recently constructed a well, and applied an electric motor to it to pump the water for his farms, which mostly cultivate fruits like grapes and pomegranates. The well he constructed did not fetch a good amount of water, and so he continues to depend on the water provided by WUAs. His experience with using irrigation water was not so good. He points to the fact that he has been an ‘outsider’ and, as such, has had to face problems in terms of accessing irrigation water.

He said:

“By requesting the neighbouring farmers as Dada Mama (brother, uncle) and by allowing them to take water even if it’s my turn, I try to avoid conflict and thereby maintain cordial relations with those who live around me, and I maintain my limited access to irrigation water.”(Interview with Bhaurao Pallad, small farmer, Rampur, in May 2012.)

Pallad explained that because he is an ‘outsider’ who has migrated to the village, he should compromise, and not get involved in local conflicts. His son Yogesh agreed with him, and by using this ‘logic’ over a period of time he has been able to gain access to irrigation water. It seems as if Pallad’s son has found a way of making an acceptable arrangement with the staff of the Association. However, Yogesh said that prior to the Pawar brothers taking over, it was really difficult for him and his father to get water for their crops. However, since the appointment of Vikas Pawar as Secretary of the WUA and Santosh as Clerk, he has gained access to irrigation water for his farm. He thanked both of them for their continuous co-operation with regard to providing him with access to irrigation water.

I found that some farmers, such as Pallad, Gorey and a few others in the same area of the DO head region of Navanth WUA, were generous in their praise of the Pawar brothers (both the Secretary and Clerk of the Parvati WUA) for giving them access to irrigation water. In case of Pawar, it is clearly evident that both the Secretary and Clerk of the Parvati WUA share good relations with Pawar.

Gorey is a well-to-do businessman residing in Nashik city. His business consists of supplying natural decomposer to the farms. He has a site for producing the natural decomposer near Chandrapur, in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. He purchased nearly four acres of land in the upstream region of command area of Navanath WUA. The farm is located just beside the main canal of Navanath WUA, and has a well-built farmhouse consisting of a two-bedroom cement structure. Pawar's son Pravin, who is twenty-five years old, manages the farm and co-ordinates its activities. He has been able to maintain good relations with the staff of the WUA. Pravin ensures that, during the time of water rotation, the farmhouse is open for the employees to take some rest, and routinely asks the servant to provide them with tea and snacks. Pravin also helps the staff of the WUA in organising different small events for the WUA, such as visits by teams from international organisation or countries to the project, or visits from the Irrigation Department. By organising these small events and taking care of employees, he has managed to get into the good books of the staff, as well as the committee members, of the Navanath WUA.

It seems that, for Pravin's services to the WUA staff, he, in turn, receives favours from them in terms of the easy, timely and adequate availability of water during the water rotation in the command area. Unlike the other WUAs, in Parvati's case, the distribution of water starts from the upstream area, followed by middle and then the tail end area. The staff favours the head-to-tail distribution of water order owing to the large command area. I found that until, an adequate amount of water is not received by the farmers in the upstream area, the staff do not allow the water to pass to the middle and tail end areas of the WUA. The provision, in a way, helps farmers- especially those like Pravin- to get adequate time to water the grape farm, and also to fill the well via the percolation of water. According to Pravin, as long as the Pawar brothers are working for the WUA, he will not have to worry about his water supply. He has faith in the distribution system organised by the Pawar brothers.

While there are certain big farmers, like Boraste (who comes from the village Palkhed), and Malude (from the village Palkhed) -who owns almost 25 acres

of land in the command area of the Parvati WUA- these farmers also complain about the WUA's irregular supply of water in the area; but they do not take water from the WUA. According to Ganesh Boraste, "it is better to have a separate source of water, rather than being dependent on the WUA, and thereby avoid getting into conflict with the native people of the village"(Interview with Ganesh Boraste, large farmer, Rampur, July 2012.) I found that the migrant farmers who are able to afford an alternative source of water avoid taking water from WUA, in order to avoid any conflict with the local farmers. I found that not being a native of the village influences one's access to irrigation water. The perception of being powerless, as expressed by Rakesh, was shared by other farmers. These 'migrant' farmers are made to feel that the village does not 'belong to them', and so they try to avoid getting into any conflict with the water authority regarding water distribution, and accept the inadequate amount of water they receive. However, Rakesh said that some small farmers are not able to access alternative sources of water, such as 'lift irrigation', from any nearby villages or from the Palkhed Dam, and, therefore, they depend completely on WUA employee decisions.

7.2.2 Water conflicts in the Lakshmi WUA command area:

The water conflicts existing in the command area of Lakshmi WUAs are very different than Navanth: they are more about differences between the farmers during the period of water distribution. Some of these cases of conflicts existing among the farmers are described below.

(i) Conflict 1: Upstream Migrant Farmers

The other migrant farmers in the upstream region of Spatsrunji WUAs also share the mixed experiences of Navanth WUA migrant farmers in terms of access to irrigation water. This includes farmers like Vadge, Chamanrao, Neghne, Wag, and Khode, who owns land in the upstream area of the Spatsrunji command area.

Bajirao Vadge is a small farmer belonging to the Maratha caste, and owns land of around three acres in the upstream area, near the main canal in the

command area. Vadge originally belonged to a village named Moraley, located in the hilly region of the Nashik district. They purchased the land in Rampur around ten to fifteen years ago. The family consists of two brothers and their families. Both the brothers and their families live together as joint family, and work on the farm. Vadge has eventually been able to develop his grape farm with the help of local 'doctor' (e.g., an agricultural expert advisor for the grapes) and earns good profit from the sale of the grapes. The farm has a well and a bore for supplying water to the field. Vadge also owns a tractor to plough and to shower medicine on the grapes. He is now planning to cultivate vegetables, like bringal and pepper, which will generate a good profit for him in the market.

Vadge told me that, as an outsider, it is difficult for him to maintain access to irrigation water in the command area. He said that, time and again, he does have differences with the neighbouring farmers- namely, Patil- over the distribution of water. But eventually, over a period of time, they have come to an understanding, and he has been able to maintain his access to irrigation water. He also favours the staff of the Lakshmi WUA- such as its secretary, Sudhir Patil- for maintaining proper supplies of water in the command area. I found that Vadge ensures that his family members take care of Sudhir when he visits, in terms of making tea for him, or giving him juice during the busy hours of water rotation.

Similarly, in the case of other farmers- like the Neghne brothers' family, which consists of three brothers and their families in the upstream region of the Lakshmi WUAs- there is also favour for the secretary, Sudhir Patil. Neghne belongs to the Maratha caste group, and comes from the Nashik city. The family brought the land in Rampur by earning money from their business of driving a truck and rickshaw, and by selling their land near Nashik. Since then, the family has been living in their farmhouse in the Rampur village. The Neghne brothers do have differences with the neighbouring farmers- again, namely Patil- in terms of access to irrigation water. The Patil family, being dominant in the upstream command area, does not create, or allow existing problems with the farmers who recently purchased land from their relatives in

the area. Most of the time, Neghne takes his turn for drawing water during the late night hours to avoid encountering difficulties with the Patil farmers.

The other farmer is Chamanrao, who is an employee of a big business man residing in Nashik. Chamanrao used to be a truck driver for a construction company. However, now, owing to his health issues, and his need to take care of his family (consisting of a wife and a young son), Chamanrao decided to work on the land of a landowner in Rampur. Chamanrao takes care of the land, and is allowed to keep all that he cultivates on this land. In one incident, I found that Chamanrao was not able to gain access to irrigation water, as Saraja Patil obstructed its flow. He tried to convince Saraja, but was not successful. Finally, he had to ask the secretary to get involved in the matter. Sudhir is a cousin of Saraja, who tried to convince him to allow Chamanrao access to irrigation water. Sarja agreed to it, but only allowed the water to pass to Chamanrao after filling his own land. In this way, farmers belonging to the Patil family try to create problems with the supply of water by delaying its availability, or by taking their turn at their convenience without considering the impact it may have on other farmers in the command area. I found that migrant farmers in the command area of Spatsrunji often ensure their access to irrigation water by maintaining good relations with the staff of the WUA and avoiding getting into conflicts with the Patil farmers. In the upstream area, there is another farmer named Khode. His son, Suman Khode, a young farmer in his twenties, takes care of the farm. In the case of Suman's farm, the family has arranged for an alternative source of water from a nearby village, through the use of lift irrigation. Sunil told me that this arrangement is far easier for him than getting involved with the local Patil farmers in the area.

(ii) Conflict 2: Dhokarey Pawar and the neighbouring farmers (middle region of the Lakshmi WUA)

The following incident occurred during the winter rotation in February 2012, in the command area of the Lakshmi WUA. The incident demonstrates the way conflicts are resolved by the WUA. Dhokarey Pawar owns a farm of around 20 to 25 acres, and belongs to the dominant Maratha family. During one rotation, he took an excessive amount of water for his wheat crop.

According to Association rules, the Secretary must allow a farmer to water his crops for four hours per acre, and this is especially important for wheat crops. Dhokarey Pawar needed the water for his four acres of land, on which he cultivates wheat. According to the rules, he should have finished his rotation within sixteen hours, before passing water through to the other farms nearby to his fields. However, he continued to water his crop for almost 28 hours.

The farmer, who was due to receive water after Pawar, is Sanjay Vanaley, who belongs to the Shepherd caste, and owns the land of around 5 to 6 acres in the command area. Sanjay complained to the Secretary about the delay, and the Secretary asked Dhokarey Pawar to wind up the watering of his crops and to pass water on to Sanjay's farm as soon as possible. Dhokarey Pawar agreed and allowed the water to pass to Sanjay's farm. However, when Sanjay was watering his farm, one of Pawar's servants (known as a *Gadi* in the local language) blocked the supply of water to Sanjay's farm, and diverted it back to Pawar's farm. Sanjay contacted the Secretary again, and informed him about the incident. The Secretary then decided to involve the Committee members, in order to resolve the dispute between Sanjay and Dhokarey Pawar. All of the committee members agreed to come to the field site and resolve the crisis but, after an hour, it was clear that no-one would be coming to the site of the water dispute. The Secretary then decided to visit the site personally to try to resolve the dispute.

Phule Guruji (a member of the Managing Committee of the WUA, who belongs to the Mali caste) was least interested in intervening in the conflict in any way. Guruji said that, "these big farmers do what they want in the command area, so when it comes to resolving their differences, it is people like them who must get involved in the matter." (Phule Guruji, member of Lakshmi WUA, February 2012.) Guruji asked the Secretary to call the Chairman, and ask him about his availability to resolve the dispute. The Chairman of the WUA told the Secretary that he was at Nashik, and would not be able to come out to the field. The Chairman then asked the Secretary to approach other members to help resolve the issue. The response given by the Chairman made the Secretary feel frustrated and angry. The Secretary then

turned to Guruji (a committee member) for help, and requested that he come with him to the field. I went out to the field as well, to document the event. On our way, we picked up another member of the Managing Committee called Shama Lunge, who resides in Shimpi Lane. Finally, in the late afternoon we had managed to get four committee members to go out to Dhokarey Pawar's land.

When we arrived, Dhokarey Pawar claimed that his servant had 'made a mistake' and had not told him about the water diversion. Surprisingly, all the committee members accepted Pawar's explanation, and the servant was scolded for being negligent and for overriding the rules of the WUA. The servant apologised to the committee members for his behaviour, and proceeded to divert the water to Sanjay's farm. Afterwards, Pawar apologised to all of the committee members, and asked them to have a cup of tea at his farm. The committee members thanked him for the offer, but each of them refused to have tea at his place. I was later told that it was an unwritten policy that committee members should not take up any immediate gifts or social offers made by any party in a dispute.

I observed that, even after this, Sanjay was still hesitant to divert the water to his fields, and he did this only after he received confirmation from the Secretary and the committee members. As Sanjay collected his water, he told the Secretary that if the same thing ever happened again, he would take matters into his own hands, and that because he is the son of a Shepherd, he would never give up his claim for water. The Secretary nodded his head in agreement, and then we went to the local tea shop. At the tea shop, the Secretary burst into laughter and said that if Sanjay was so powerful, he should have carried out his claims earlier in the evening, but instead he waited for the Managing Committee members to intervene in the matter, and this shows that Sanjay is scared of the Pawar family. The Secretary also commented on the weak position of the Shepherd community in the village. It was only later, talking to other farmers such as Umesh Vanaley (small farmer belonging to Shepherd caste) and Bandu Joshi (small farmer belonging to Brahmin caste), that I discovered that it was not the first time that Patil had

behaved in this way. In general, he is always un-cooperative with other farmers in the area; mostly those belonging to the Mali and Shepherd castes. In the case of Umesh Vanaley, I found that he usually avoids sharing his turn of watering the field with Dhokarey Pawar. He prefers, rather, to wait for someone else to take up his turn; and only when Dhokarey Pawar finishes his turn, Vanaley goes for taking his turn. By doing this, Umesh tries to avoid getting into confrontations with Dhokarey Pawar.

7.3 Analysis of the conflicts:

The water conflicts discussed above depict a complex picture of the process of water distribution in the area. From each of the case studies in both WUAs, it appears that certain big farmers belonging to the Maratha caste- compared to other non-dominant caste farmers- enjoy favours in terms of access to irrigation water.

In the first case study, Suresh Morey's being a big farmer (Parvati WUA) from the dominant Maratha caste naturally gives him an upper edge on other non-dominant caste farmers, in terms of identifying himself with the other Maratha constituting the managing committee of the WUA. Secondly, Suresh, owing to his class position, can afford economically to maintain the informal relationship with the WUAs staff. These two factors consolidate and strengthen Suresh's position compared to other non-dominant caste small farmers, such as Govind and Rajaram Phule, in the command area. Similarly, the case of conflict in the patch of Motiram Patil (Parvati WUA) also shows the dominance exercised by the farmers over others in terms of using caste and class positions to manipulate the supply of irrigation water. In the case of conflict in Lakshmi WUAs, I find that it is easy for Dhokarey Pawar, who comes from the dominant caste and enjoys a strong economic position, to dominate the process of water distribution; overlooking the claims of the other small and medium non-dominant caste farmers in the command area.

In all of the cases, the Maratha farmers exercise their dominance over the other farmers involved in the conflicts, owing to their caste domination and class position, which helps in terms of manipulating the members of the

WUAs, and maintains their access to irrigation water. The dominant farmers exercise their power through the networks that they build through informal relationships with the members of the managing committee and the staff of the WUAs.

As one explores the case of small farmers, as well as migrant farmers, one finds that the significance of informal relationships is also evident for them. This is apparent in the case of farmers like Sunil Patil and Baba Patil. In the patch of Motiram Patil, it can be seen that caste is not the only basis of discrimination among the farmers. It is evident that, among the dominant caste farmers, small farmers who lack economic capital find it hard to build up their relationships with the WUA staff. I found that caste provides a natural platform, and an easy way for the farmers belonging to the Maratha caste- as compared to other non-dominant caste farmers- to identify themselves with, and form relations with, the staff and the committee members. It also depends upon the farmers themselves in terms of how they establish these relations and nurture them.

I found that building informal relationships with the WUAs staff is one of the many strategies adopted by the smaller and lower-caste farmers in order to maintain their access to irrigation water. The most common strategies that were evident from the case studies, and were mostly adopted by the lower-caste and small farmers, as well as migrant farmers were: avoiding conflict, being compliant, searching help from WUA officials, open resistance, and building upon social capital.

These strategies equally apply to migrant farmers like Pravin who, in spite of stiff opposition to the migrant farmers in the village, is able to maintain his access to irrigation water.

I find that farmers who adopt these strategies mostly depend upon their position and circumstances. As seen in the case of most of the small and middle-caste farmers, it is evident that they try to avoid conflict with the dominant-caste farmers to maintain their access to irrigation water. The middle-caste farmers mostly try to establish relationships with the WUA staff,

who in practice, control the distribution process of water in the command area. This is more evident in case of the Lakshmi WUAs, where the farmers from the Mali community are in good standing with the secretary, who ensures that the farmers receive an adequate amount of supply of water. Similarly, in the case of Laxman Govardhan (a Mali farmer in Parvati command area), he is able to maintain the access to irrigation water by maintaining good relationships with the staff of the WUAs. However, in cases where the farmers are not able to build relationships with the staff, they go for rather submissive ways of access, such as taking water in the night hours to avoid conflict with the dominant-caste farmers in the area. This is evident in case of Dalit farmers in the command area of Parvati WUA, like Milind Kamble (medium farmer), Balasaheb Kamble (small farmer), and Sharad Kamble (medium farmer). These men usually take their turns during night hours, as it allows them to have a continuous flow of water, without disruptions created by the Maratha farmers in the upstream area. In the case of Sharad Kamble, I found he adopts a very different way to keep officials away from his farm to access irrigation water. He has two big dogs, which he usually lets free during the water rotation. In fear of the dogs, the WUA officials do not go to his land to withhold him from accessing excess amount of water. Apart from these cases of resistance, I find that the lower-caste and small farmers hardly ever demonstrate any resistance, and operate via more of a compliant nature. Having stated this, one needs to understand that the nature of compliance varies depending on the position of the farmer, and the location of his farmland. In a case where the field of a farmer belonging to lower-caste community is surrounded by dominant-caste farmers, the strategy of building up relationships with the WUA officials hardly ever works out. As seen in case of Vanely (a farmer belonging to Shepherd community, in the upstream area of Navanth WUA), where he cannot even turn to WUA officials, who also belong to a dominant caste, to ask for justice. In this case, I found that, since the Navanth WUA staff members belong to the Pawar family, they do not want to interfere in the area belonging to the Patil family. In such cases, the farmer has to submit himself to the condition, and is left to depend upon the wishes of the neighbouring farmers. He has to continuously negotiate his access to irrigation water with his neighbours in order to receive a proper

supply of water. In cases where the land of farmers from lower-caste, small farmers, and also migrant farmers is not completely surrounded by dominant-caste farmers, the level of compliance is different, whereby the farmer can at least make demands to the officials for an equitable supply of water. This is more evident in case of migrant farmers in the Lakshmi WUA upstream area. In this case, since the Secretary belongs to the Patil family, he can at least negotiate on behalf of the migrant farmers asking his brothers to allow water to pass to these other non-Patil farmer in the area.

This informal relationship with the WUA staff helps the migrant farmers to overcome certain constraints, in terms of being seen as outsiders who are threatening to local farmers. In the case of Pravin Pawar, a Maratha farmer who, in spite of being an outsider of the village, has been able to form informal relations with the staff, and maintain his access to irrigation water. While Rakesh, a migrant farmer belonging to the Mali caste, is not able to form relations with the WUA staff, owing to his stiff attitude towards the indifference shown by the Parvati WUA staff towards other non-dominant caste farmers in the command area.

There are very few farmers who actually put up open resistance to the WUAs officials, as no-one wants to lose their access to irrigation water by inconveniencing the WUA staff. The open resistance against the supply of water is either put up by farmers like Govind Phule in Parvati, who completely lost his access to irrigation water, or by farmers like Bhaskar Kamble (large farmer), who, belonging to Dalit family, considers that the WUA do not provide him with enough water.

In a way, the complex nature of water conflicts show us that neither caste nor class position matter in terms of determining one's access to irrigation water. Rather, one's access depends upon the mixed relationship of caste and class. I found that it also depends upon the individual farmer's manner, in terms of the way he negotiates his access to irrigation water. Although, one needs to understand that the nature of the relationships maintained by the Mali and other lower-caste farmers do vary in terms of Maratha farmers. The staff of the WUA, who belong to the Maratha caste, look down on the non-dominant caste

farmers. The staff considers that they are doing non-dominant caste farmers a favour by providing them access to water. This is seen more often in the case of Dalit farmers, who lack both the social and economic tools required for building and maintaining the relationship with the farmers.

Secondly, I find the role of the Secretary matters a lot in terms of the functioning of the WUA. In the case of Parvati, the Secretary is hardly dependent on the income earned from the WUAs. Unlike the Navanth, the committee members in the Lakshmi WUA come from non-dominant Mali castes- such as Phule Guruji, and Tidke- and play a significant role in raising the voices of non-dominant caste farmers in the WUA.

The other thing that these conflicts bring to light is the effective functioning of the WUA committee members, and way they address conflict. It is evident that the nature of conflict in the two WUAs is quite different. In the Parvati WUA, the conflicts have taken a permanent form, significantly affecting the access of the small farmers in the command area. In the case of conflicts in Lakshmi, they are more concerned with the differences among the farmers that arise owing to the un-cooperative behaviour of some of the farmers (mostly those belonging to the dominant Maratha caste). This says something about the functioning of the WUA committee, and their desire to resolve these differences between the farmers. In Lakshmi, you have members like Phule Guruji and Shama Lungi who, despite their limitation in terms of caste and class position, are at least able to intervene in the matter, and try to resolve the differences among the farmers. The incidence of Dhokarey Patil demonstrated that, in spite of caste and class bias in terms of the WUAs committee, there does exist the idea of equal distribution among the farmers. This is something to which they can appeal, and can hope to get justice in terms of receiving their due share of water. I think that this existence of hope regarding getting their due share of water is also based on the role played by the Secretary, who himself comes from a lower-class family, which owns a small amount of land in the command area. The Secretary, in order to prove himself, always tries to keep differences among the farmers at a minimal level.

In the case of Parvati, I find that the small farmers in the case study have lost the hope of resolving the conflicts. The possible reason for this sense of loss of hope among the small farmers in the Parvati WUA is related to the composition of the committee members, which is mostly dominated by the Maratha members, and lacks a strong voice of a non-dominant caste member in its ranks. The members that form the WUA committee are mostly small, non-dominant caste farmers, such as Kamble (small farmer belonging to Dalit caste), Vanaley (small farmers in the upstream region, belonging to shepherd caste), Lohat (small farmer belonging to scavenger caste), and Hausabhai (small farmer coming from Adivasi community). These members not only lack the necessary capital in terms of caste, but also class, to raise their strong opposition to the existing dominant-caste committee members. In the case of Lohat- whose son runs a business ploughing the field by tractor- he, in a way, is dependent on the Maratha farmers for his earnings. Comparatively, in the case of Kamble, who runs the local welding shop, he has to maintain good relations with the committee members, out of necessity for his business. The cases of Vanaley and Hausabhai demonstrate how some farmers cannot put up resistance against the committee members, owing to their caste and class positioning. In the case of Hausabhai, I found that the committee members, like Shriram Tatya, helps her son in matters related to the agricultural office such as land tax or other schemes. In a way, I found that the non-dominant caste members of the Parvati have a complex and dependent relationship with the dominant caste members of the committee. This shows us the way caste and class relations affect the composition of the WUA committee, and thereby its ability to resolve the differences among the farmers, and achieve the goal of equitable distribution of water.

7.4 Conclusion:

The existence of conflict in the area shows us that there is no such thing as cooperation among the farmers. Rather; what exists is the alliance between the farmers and the WUAs staff that is oriented along caste and class lines. The cooperation that is being talked about by the staff with the farmers appears in the cases of small non-dominant caste farmers as a way of exercising the

dominance of the dominant caste groups over others. The strategies adopted by the farmers to maintain their access to irrigation water depends upon their caste, as well as class position. It seems that open resistance to the WUAs is not possible- especially by the small farmers, owing to the closed nature of a village economy, where everyone is, in one way or another, dependent on each other. This is more evident in the case of the Adivasi farmers in the command area, who have to depend on the dominant-caste farmers in terms of their livelihood. The other thing that these conflicts depict is the discrimination in terms of the distribution of water, which cannot be understood in a simple binary of 'upstream' and 'low stream' farmers, as usually understood in terms of the management of irrigation systems (Chambers, 1988). The case studies show that caste and class continues to find influence- even among the upstream farmers- in terms of the distribution of water. So, the WUAs' move to give justice to the farmers in the tail-end area needs to be reviewed in light of the finding that even the farmers in the upstream area are discriminated against, in terms of the allocation of water.

The other important factor that one comes across through these conflicts is the capability of the WUA, as an institution, in its ability to resolve conflicts among its member farmers. It cannot be said that the WUAs totally failed to resolve the conflicts among the farmers. The WUAs' policy of social pressure can work, up to a certain limit, to compel the big farmers to obey the norms of the WUA. However, in cases where the big farmers have more input and networks in terms of social and village politics- such as Suresh Morey- it seems that the policy of social pressure hardly ever works out. In such cases, it seems that WUA committee members prefer to withdraw themselves from the conflict, rather than getting into confrontations with the big farmers and losing an important means of economic gain.

Secondly, it also depends upon the individual member's desire to resolve these conflicts, and on their powers of persuasion. In the case of the Lakshmi WUA, members like Phule Guruji and Shama Lungi do come forward to resolve the conflicts in the area. However, where there is lack of such persuasion among

the committee members, the WUA do not succeed in resolving the differences among the farmers, and have thereby failed the institution.

Apart from these issues, it can be seen that the pricing of water does affect the small farmers, in that it limits their option to cultivate other crops, and hinders their potential to increase their income. As seen in the case of Dattu, it is evident that small farmers do sometimes have aspirations to enhance their economic earning but, owing to the high price of water during the summer, they are left with no other option but to look out for seasonal employment in terms of agricultural labour. The other issue that I found is that the rise in the price of water during summer rotation is rationalised on the basis of scarcity of water, which naturally excludes the small and marginalised farmers, who are unable to pay for it. The process of rationalisation of water pricing is imposed by the WUA in a way that it appears to be natural for the farmers. It in a way gives a narrow meaning to the agenda of 'equitable distribution of water' as propounded by the policy. Although, as seen in the case studies, the small farmers find the pricing of water to be biased against them- but, owing to their lack of voice and collective strength, they do not challenge these norms. By keeping silent, they give their unwilling consent to the unjust price system.

Chapter -8

Maintaining Upper Caste Dominance: Land acquisition, Caste discrimination and Party politics.

8.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on looking beyond the WUAs, and at how water is implicated in wider strategies of land acquisition and caste discrimination, through which the Marathas reproduce their dominance. In order to understand this, I engage with the literature that looks at water as a link between people, through which various social and political dimensions are acted out (Mehta, 2005). I argue that the formation of WUAs do not challenge the social dominance; rather, it provides a new avenue for the dominant to enhance their domination in other areas. In a way, the WUAs become a new site for the formation of alliances, or for the rise of further contestation between local caste conflicts- or for factional affiliation with the aim of challenge; or for retaining, as well as enhancing, the caste power. It shows that the inequalities observed in the social and economic sphere among the farmers prior to the introduction of PIM reforms continue to surface in the functioning of the WUA. Thereby, one comes to the understanding that, as argued by Baviskar, struggles over water are simultaneously struggles for power over symbolic representations and material resources (Baviskar, 2007). Thus, the chapter proves that managing a collective resource such as water is a source of power.

The evidence produced in the chapter is in form of informal interviews conducted with the farmers in the area.

The chapter is divided into the following sections: the way Maratha domination is used to acquire the land (8.1), followed by an example which shows the way farmers use caste and political party relations to maintain access to irrigation water (8.3), a discussion on the way caste discrimination is carried out in the process of distribution of water (8.4), the way migrants struggle for social capital (8.5) and, lastly, the conclusion (8.6).

8.2 Water and land acquisition:

This section discusses the unequal distribution of irrigation water and land acquisition by big farmers. Govind Phule is a small farmer who owns 0.75 acres of land. His story was discussed in the previous chapter. It is quite evident that Govind faces significant problems accessing irrigation water due to the unwillingness of the WUA to mediate in cases of conflict between farmers. Due to the conflict not being resolved by the WUA, Govind is compelled to rely on well water. According to Govind, his inability to access irrigation water has been noticed by some of the big farmers in the area. One of these big farmers (whose name Govind does not want to disclose) offered Govind the option to sell his land. Govind told me that this offer was communicated via a small farmer who lives near his farm. However, Govind refused to sell his land. Instead, Govind adopted the strategy of asking a much higher price for the land; this strategy was intended to reduce the interest of the big farmer in the deal. Govind claims that if you state a price much higher than the market price, the big farmer loses interest in the deal. Govind has noticed that this issue of land sale is in some way linked to the spate of unresolved conflicts relating to field channels.

According to Govind, other farmers have experienced a similar chain of events. Firstly, small farmers are denied access to irrigation water when the big farmers close the field channels. Afterwards, if the smaller farmers cannot find an alternative water supply, they are forced to sell their land to the neighbouring big landowning farmer. Govind suggests that the larger farmers are putting pressure on smaller farmers to sell their land when they are unable to make a profit due to water shortages. After continuous pressure, the small farmers give in and opt to sell. However, the strategy adopted by the big farmers is not to approach the smaller farmers directly, but rather, to use an intermediary, which is usually another small farmer. Then, the intermediary helps to transfer the land to the big landowning farmer. This story suggests that the WUA's irrigation system is potentially being used by big farmers in order to secure more land.

The relationship between the unequal distribution of irrigation water and improper land acquisition has been confirmed by other small farmers and, according to them, there is a growing tendency among large farmers- especially those involved in the lucrative cultivation of grapes- to acquire land to expand their crops. Big farmers can afford to cultivate grapes on a large scale, and the larger the crops, the more economical it is to cultivate, which increases profits. Therefore, these farmers are always looking for extra land, in order to expand their businesses. According to small farmers, the denial of access to irrigation water is one of the main strategies adopted by influential farmers in order to obtain the land of the small farmer at a lower price than the market price in the area.

It is the Adivasi and Dalit farmers who most strongly identify with the ongoing process of land acquisition. This is evident from the experiences of two Adivasi farmers named Suresh Pawar and Sunil Chandravanshi. Both farmers own around twenty-five acres of land in the command area, and most of this land is kept fallow due to the unavailability of water. Both Suresh and Sunil are surrounded by dominant Maratha farms. In the early days of the WUA, the village elders approached their fathers and asked them to become members of the WUA. As well, in these early years, they received plenty of water. Later on, however, the land that was allotted for their field channel was acquired by influential farmers from the upward region, who in turn denied them access to irrigation water.

After the deaths of their fathers, Suresh and Sunil were not invited to become members of the WUA. According to Sunil and his wife, the big farmers did not allow water to reach Sunil's land, and this was done in order to force him to sell his land. Both also claim that these farmers are supported by the WUA. Indeed, due to a lack of water, Sunil's family is planning to sell their land.

Farmers such as Subhas Charuskar belong to the Adivasi group, and they hardly ever receive water from the WUA. The Charuskar family comprises an elder son, Subhas- who is in his early twenties- their mother, one sister, and their father who is in his forties. Subhas and his mother work as agricultural labourers to earn income for the family. Subhas is employed on a contract

basis in a Poly House owned by Surendra Phule. The Lakshmi WUA map shows that the Charuskar farm is outside of the command area of the WUA. However, when the MMISF 2005 act came into force, every farmer in the area was allowed to become a member of the Association. However, even then, the WUA continued to deny water to the family. Now, other members of the Association who live near the Charuskar family take water that is supposed to be allocated to the Adivasi family, on the basis that the Adivasi family 'does not use it'. The Charuskar family has taken up the issue with the WUA, but the dispute is taking a long time for the committee members to review, mainly due to the limited financial resources of the family, and so in the meantime, the family is relying on rainwater to cultivate their crops.

Kachru Kamble is a small landholding Dalit farmer, who is one of a group of Dalit farmers who cultivate vegetables, coriander, sugar cane (in small amounts), and wheat. The majority of their land is kept uncultivated for most of the year, and their agricultural activities are less developed than those of farmers in other areas. These farmers still use a bullock, rather than modern farming machinery. Only two Kamble families cultivate grapes. One of the reasons for the under-development of this land is because more than half of the Kamble belt does not receive irrigation water provided by the WUA, due to a lack of field channels, especially where farms fall into the tail-end part of the command area. The WUA staff has justified its lack of infrastructure by saying that the topography of the land is not suitable for receiving irrigation water and, therefore, it would be too costly to construct these channels.

The Dalit Farmers informed me that they currently depend on rain-water during the monsoon, and on the community well for the rest of the year. In their opinion, the Association is not investing in infrastructure because of the influence of the large farmers, who are mostly Marathas and do not want water to be supplied to the lower regions.

From the interviews I conducted, I concluded that caste and class are factors that influence access to irrigation water. The Dalit farmers lack the necessary voice to question the functioning of the WUAs. The inability of farmers who belong to marginalised groups to access water throws the WUA's agenda of

empowerment and its basic water distribution mandate into doubt. Furthermore, despite this injustice, many do not seek to address their problems at the general meeting organised by the WUAs. Kachru believes that no one in the WUA will take their appeals seriously. Additionally, these farmers show no interest in pursuing the matter with the local NGO. The farmers belonging to the marginalised groups seem to accept their position, and do not confront their circumstances; nor do they seek to challenge them. I find that the local NGO working with the associations also demonstrates apprehension, and does not pursue such matters with the managing committee of the WUAs. In fact, I realise that there is no unifying platform from which the common farmers can come and appeal to NGO for support in putting forward their demands. To me, it seems that the local NGO has become a body that appears not to be accessible for the farmers. Accessibility might have been the case in the past, when farmers used to approach the local NGO regarding the issue of water distribution, but during my fieldwork, I never observed a farmer approaching any members of the NGO, or vice versa. It can be seen that, while farmers generally do not approach the irrigation department or the NGO, they need to resolve their issues with the managing committee of the WUAs.

8.3 Water and caste discrimination:

I found that access to water is guaranteed for members of the upper castes who support the dominant political party in the village.

Raju Joshi is a small landholding farmer who belongs to the Brahmin caste, and he is afforded significant respect within the Brahmin community in the village. He fashions himself as a representative of the entire Brahmin community in the village. He is an active member of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), who has consistently supported Yashwantrao Pawar- who is the candidate of Shiv Sena (another right-wing political party active in the village). The interesting aspect of the relationship between Raju Joshi and Nana Patil is the way family loyalties are worked out within the framework of politics in the village. When Nana's father, Sainath Bhau, was the leader of the Shetkari Kamgar Paksh (SKP), most of the Brahmin family members worked as members of the party under Sainath Bhau's leadership. Now, Nana has

taken over this leadership, and the Brahmin community continues to support the family's leadership of the village.

The one obvious reason for this support is the ideological similarities between the two political parties. However, this mutual support also has a caste and family dimension. Raju Joshi actively organised political campaigns in support of Yashwantrao Pawar during the Zilla Parishad elections in 2013. The elections were conducted in the month of November, during a period of water rotation. Raju Joshi claims that due to his involvement in campaigning, he and other members of his family were not able to manage their water properly, and, therefore, they demanded more water from the Secretary of the WUA. The Secretary did not entertain their demands, and asked them to contact the President of the WUA (Yashwantrao Pawar). When Raju Joshi contacted Yashwantrao Pawar, Pawar made a personal request to the Irrigation Department, who allotted the water to Raju Joshi, even though the local WUA had finished their usual period of water rotation. The water was brought down from the main canal for Raju Joshi and his family members. The Secretary himself explained how this incident highlights politics influences within the functioning of the Association. The Secretary claimed that he did not interfere in the incident because he felt it was a matter to be solved between Nana and Raju Joshi, and he wanted to avoid confrontation with the President, so as to avoid accusations that he was responsible for the mismanagement of water. Even then, the other committee members did not make an objection when the President gave extra water to Raju Joshi and his family members.

However, the majority of the Brahmin caste does not have political networks to rely on and, therefore, they sometimes experience problems related to accessing water. This is evident from the experience of Vikram Kulkarni, a farmer who also owns land in the Parvati command area. He complained about the bias demonstrated by the WUA when resolving differences over field channels. Vikram is the son of a retired army officer, and is the Head of the Communist Party in the village. He belongs to a middle-income family, and lives on the revenue earned from performing religious rituals, as well as on his father's pension. Despite owning land, he stopped his farming activities due to

a controversy over a field channel with his neighbour, Suresh Morey. He claims that the land in the field channel is being used by Suresh to cultivate grapes, and as a result, he is not able to access irrigation water. Furthermore, he explained that the WUA in the village could not resolve the conflict because it involved Suresh- who is a large and influential farmer in the village. Vikram claims that the WUA committee members are under the influence of the large farmers, and, therefore, it is difficult to get justice from the Association. Therefore, Vikram eventually lost interest in agriculture, owing to a lack of available water.

Similar stories have been relayed to me by farmers belonging to the Shimpi (tailoring) caste. The Patekar family was once an influential family in the village, who used to live in a joint family. According to Vijay Patekar, the elder son of the Patekar family, who now resides on Shimpi Lane, the family once owned a large area of farmland, and had numerous animals which used to be worshipped during the Pola Festival (a Hindu festival that worships bullocks and cows). However, the family divided and sold off some of their land to the Maratha farmers, or offered it for lease. Following this, the family lost their significance in the village.

The Patekar family holds a grudge against the Marathas, but they do not express it publicly. One Patekar family member told me about this grudge in a tea shop, when there were no people around. I believe that I was party to this confession purely because I was able to gain the Patekars' confidence and trust. The grudge held by many farmers towards the Maratha caste became more evident when I spoke to a farmer named Kadar. Kadar belongs to a lower-caste Muslim community. His land was taken away by the WUA in order to construct a field channel. His family is the only Muslim family in the village engaged in farming. The other Muslim families work as daily-wage labourers, or perform the duties of butchers or maids. Kadar's experience of the formation of the WUA highlights the domination of the Marathas- not only in village politics; but in the formation of the WUA. According to Kadar, he was physically threatened when he objected to his land being taken. He claims that, due to the Marathas' close relationship with the Irrigation Department, he

lost his case against the Marathas, and he subsequently succumbed to the pressure they were applying and gave up his land.

It is evident that caste networks, as well as political networks, are central to determining a farmer's access to irrigation water. In the case of farmers who belong to a higher caste, but who lack political resources, it is difficult for them to maintain access to irrigation water. Similarly, farmers who belong to the middle-caste groups such as the Shimpi, lack the necessary economic and social power that is necessary to challenge problems relating to access to irrigation water.

The above stories depict how the 'logic' of caste discrimination is also used to discriminate against middle-caste groups who practice agriculture. These groups share the same sense of powerlessness as the Dalits in comparison to the Maratha community. The sense of Maratha domination becomes even more apparent when a middle-caste family farm is surrounded by the presence of a powerful Maratha family. As well as this, the geographical location of land, and who owns it, influences who receives adequate irrigation water, and when they receive it. The physical or geographical location of the land matters in relation to the percolation of the canal water.

In general, land at the tail end of the command area receives water first, and then the water supply shifts upstream, and outlets are closed down along the way. Throughout the water rotation, the water flows through a canal percolating below the earth. The percolation of water recharges the wells surrounding the canal. Since the water flows continuously throughout the rotation in the upstream region, the wells in the upstream region receive more water than the wells in the middle and tail-end area. The well water can be used to water crops in the absence of canal water. Secondly, most of the water is distributed among farmers located upstream in a more liberal manner. I observed this occurrence at both WUAs. Also, liberal water distribution upstream occurred at Lakshmi in lands belonging to the dominant Patil Maratha family.

Therefore, farmers in the head region have the potential to receive the twin benefits of the liberal supply of water and good percolation of water, compared with the rest of the farmers in the command area. However, as discussed earlier, this situation does not mean that everybody in the head region receives these benefits equally. As pointed out earlier, the Neghne brothers, the Dhokres and others belonging to non-dominant castes still have to wait for their turn, and the Association is stricter with these farmers about the time they are allowed to water the crops. I found that the rumour relating to tail-end discrimination due to water flow is not true for all the farmers in the tail-end area. Some farmers at the tail-end area of Parvati WUA (near the HL compound line) receive an appropriate supply of water, as this belt belongs to the dominant Patil family, who have a strong voice in the Parvati WUA. Also, the influential committee member, Prabhakar Patil, owns land at the end of the canal, and he receives an appropriate supply of water.

Therefore, although the geographical or physical location of the land does matter for the percolation of water, it does not necessarily affect the supply of water, as key association members and groups can manipulate this.

As I reflected back on the comments made by farmers from the lower- and middle-caste groups I found that, irrespective of their class position, these farmers felt marginalised and dominated by the upper castes in the village. Also, they felt that caste dynamics contributed to issues with accessing irrigation water. Caste discrimination is used in the village not only to deny access to irrigation water, but also to empower certain castes above others. This discrimination makes it difficult for members of the middle and lower castes to identify with the goals of the WUA. In addition to this, these lower- and middle-caste farmers perceive that the WUA system allows the appropriation of more and more land by the upper castes. What is interesting is that this sense of being discriminated against is shared by both the middle and the lower castes.

Reflecting on these complexities of caste relationships in the village, what becomes clear is that the WUA is failing to act as a conflict-resolving body for the farmers. Instead, the WUA endorses and supports already existing social

and economic structures operating within the village. The small farmers express bitterness about the inability of the WUA as an institution to address the contradictory decisions they make based on caste. This means that the role of the WUA as a neutral administrative and regulating body has been lost, and this is partly due to caste politics in the village. It is clear that committee members represent the interests of particular dominant castes, and that these castes work together to safeguard the interests of large and influential farmers.

Small landholding farmers seem to doubt that the WUA, in spite of being a local body, can resolve their differences. In fact, I found that most of the small farmers- especially the farmers from the Dalit community- expressed more faith in the old irrigation system, when the irrigation department staff directly controlled the distribution of water. According to some Dalit farmers, under the previous system, they found it easy to negotiate access to irrigation water- in spite of the corruption in the system. The localisation of the administrative process of irrigation water seems to have presented difficulties for small landholding farmers from the middle and lower castes, particularly when they are trying to overcome local power hierarchies in order to ensure continuous access to irrigation water. In fact, according to many farmers, the expansion of privatisation and globalisation (terms that are more familiar to the farmers now than they were ten years ago) has made them lose hope in expecting any change- not only in the water sector, but in other areas of industry, generally.

Even the local NGO appears to be limited in the service it can provide to represent local farmers and to encourage small farmer participation in the system. Furthermore, the Dalit farmers seem to lack any knowledge about the involvement of the NGO in the WUA system. For some reason, the connections between the WUA and the NGO, and their shared history of the establishment of the WUA in the area is not realised or articulated by the farmers. Despite efforts made by NGO staff in the current organisational context, conflicts and inequalities among farmers are still very much alive in the command area. The larger farmers are able to maintain their hegemony and benefits in terms of water access; but this is at a cost to the smaller farmers in the area. Now, the NGO seems to act as an agency for project

implementation, and it has chosen to overlook certain contradictions in order to successfully implement the WUA project.

Moreover, small farmers still continue to have faith in the Irrigation Department. They share the belief that the irrigation bureaucracy can give them justice, in spite of the fact that water management has been transferred to WUAs. The only concern that the small farmers express is that the Department should stop believing the claims made by dominant farmers and by the NGO, and should try to meet farmers individually in order to understand their problems. This shows that small farmers still somehow continue to have faith in the state and its agency. This faith in the state is more evident among the Adivasi and Dalit farmers, who trust the government's role in implementing schemes for poorer sections of the village and its surrounding area. However, these marginalised groups also believe that the dominant and politically strong farmers can influence the implementation of these schemes, and corner the benefits for themselves.

From the farmers' viewpoint, the policy of WUAs fails to address the social and economic complexities of their lives, and this makes it difficult for small landholding farmers to identify themselves with the WUA institution.

8.4 From water conflicts to caste conflicts:

This section will present a collection of interviews and observations relating to the domination of the Maratha caste within the politics of the WUAs. The narratives presented in this section speak explicitly to caste and caste discrimination.

In day-to-day village life, I found that the Maratha farmers behave condescendingly towards members of the lower and middle castes, irrespective of the economic status of the lower- or middle-caste member. This dynamic was observed during the three-day festival of Mallahar Baba, the village Deity. During the celebration, the Phule family (who belong to the Mali caste) conducted the ritual of Janmasathami (the Hindu ritual of the birth

of Lord Krishna) and they organised wrestling, and bullock cart racing.³ However, despite undertaking this key role, members of the Phule family were treated as an object of ridicule by the dominant Maratha farmers. One of the members of the Pawar family started to make fun of Rajaram Phule (who is the leader of the Mali community) by commenting that it is the Malis who now hold the power in the village. Other farmers laughed at this, and Rajaram joined in to say that Pawars are now ruling the village.

During the course of my fieldwork, I was treated with suspicion by the non-Dalit farmers in the instances when I paid regular visits to Balasaheb Kamble, a small farmer belonging to the Dalit community. On one occasion, I was listening to Balasaheb telling me about the different parts of a bullock cart and their functions, when Bhimrao Patil, from the Maratha caste, passed by on his motorcycle. He looked at me and shouted, “Yes, yes, listen to him, and he will tell you all about the progressive farming techniques used by the Dalits.” On another occasion, I travelled into the village on my bike, and I decided to offer a ride into the village to the father of Balasaheb Kamble (as previously mentioned; a Dalit farmer). When I arrived in the village, a group of Patil farmers- that included Nitin Patil; an influential farmer’s son- looked at me strangely, and then turned their faces away from me.

Yet another example of this discrimination occurred when a young member of the Patil family accidentally ran his motorbike into a child on Shimpi Lane (i.e the tailor’s lane where farmers belonging to the Shimpi caste reside). Rather than apologising, the driver shouted at the child, calling him ‘*shimpiya chapor*’ which means ‘son of a Shimpi’. This phrase is often used as a derogatory remark. The driver was then apprehended by a gang of farmers, who tried to thrash him, but he was rescued by other members of the Patil family. Following this event, I was listening to a discussion between members of the Patil gang who rescued the driver. They were laughing at the way the Shimpi objected to the use of the derogatory term. They said it is only the Marathas that do not feel ashamed of being called a ‘Maratha’, owing to their influential

³ Bullock cart racing is now prohibited by law for reasons of safety by the state. However, this event is still organised by the village leaders, for reasons of village pride.

role in the history of the village. They also commented that if the ambush had escalated, they would have 'made sure' their Patil 'brother' was well-protected in the fight. Then they started to sing a song glorifying the role of Marathas in the village.

Another example of discrimination in the village relates to how members of the WUA interact at the committee offices. I found that the employees of WUA do not socialise much with Ramesh Lohat and Subhas Kamble, committee members belonging to the lower-caste groups. I also found that making jokes about caste seems to be a part of everyday fun among the dominant-caste farmers. However, the Mali farmers, and other farmers in the community, express dislike for these jokes. However, when faced with these jokes in person, the non-dominant caste members tend to ignore these comments, and they justify this lack of reaction by stating that these powerful families have been 'in power for a long time'.

My regular visits to the WUAs revealed the extent to which the Maratha farmers occupy the Association offices, and consistently hold prominent positions in the operation of the local WUAs, which reinforces their political and social power. Although many middle-caste farmers were originally involved in the setting-up of the Associations, the majority of influential positions on the Committee are now held by Maratha farmers. I found that all of the twenty-four WUAs in the region have a Maratha farmer as their Secretary. This presence has strengthened the Maratha community in the area, and has reinforced their influence over the rest of community.

The experience of being helpless is more evident among the lower-caste groups, such as the Adivasi and Dalits (the former 'untouchable' caste). These farmers do not have a strong economic background to support their claims within the WUAs. As stated earlier, it is evident that being an agricultural labourer or the owner of a small plot of land does not provide a platform for engaging with the dominant caste groups in the village. However, the domination of the Marathas is not absolute.

Sometimes, however, the supremacy of the Marathas becomes completely intolerable to the farmers, and conflict becomes violent. According to Ashok Gaikwad, a few years ago a Patil farmer constructed a bund (bridge) across his land in order to cross over to another farm. Ashok asked the Patil farmer to remove the bund, but the request was ignored. In retaliation, Ashok decided to take stern action against the other farmer. He approached members of the Communist party in the district office, who advised Ashok to remove the bund by use of physical force. The plan was to remove the bund on Saturday afternoon, just after the Courts had closed for the weekend. It was thought that this would remove the opportunity for the Patil farmer to take any immediate action against Ashok.

On the day of the planned action, Ashok, alongside some members of the Communist party, and some members of Ashok's family (the total party amounting to approximately fifty people) arrived at the farm, and started removing the bund by hand. Patil noticed what was happening, and tried to stop them, but he was quickly overcome, and thrashed by Ashok and his family members. The entire thrashing incident was carried out in a very short timeframe; before Patil could call for help from his family members. However, Ashok and his party were able to remove the bund, and, eventually, they all left the field. Once the bund was removed, the Patil farmer had no choice but to accept the situation. In concluding his narrative, Ashok said that, "When the water level goes above your head, we need take action against them." (Interview with Ashok Gaikwad, landless labour, Navanath WUA command area, Rampur, in June 2012.)

The case of Ashok shows that when things get too much, other castes do have the capacity to organise and take action. In the case of Ashok, his membership of the Communist party, and support and guidance from the party in terms of advice and support from other party members (who mostly belong to the Adivasi community) enabled him to carry out the action against the dominant-caste farmer. I found that this kind of incident only happens under special conditions. Usually, the dominant castes go unchallenged, even when the motivation to challenge is very strong- as it is among the Dalit farmers.

The Dalits will not hesitate to criticise the upper castes strongly and publicly, and they are not hesitant in talking about how their behaviour affects the village. However, the other non-dominant caste members fear revealing their true feelings known within the village. The other non-dominant caste, such as Mali and Shepherd, do share a grudge against the domination of the Maratha- but I hardly ever found them engaging in activities that resist the domination of the Marathas in the village. More recently, I find that the young Mali farmers are making attempts to organise themselves as a group, but this is mostly limited to agricultural activities- in terms of an exchange of knowledge about the crops; savings groups; and in making visits to different places to discover new techniques of agricultural production, etc. So in a way, the group has limited itself to agricultural activities, rather than developing as a group for raising the concerns of, or advocating the cause of Mali farmers in the village. In a very similar way, people from the Shepherd community have also formed a cultural group, known as ‘Thadpadaya Manch’ (‘Struggling Forum’), which mostly organises the religious cultural festivals celebrated by the Shepherd community- such as the Birthday Celebration of King Mallaharrao Holkar (a king who resided in the 17th Century), etc. To me, it seems that the community strength of these groups has not been able to transform into the practice of putting up strong resistance against the dominant-caste farmers, especially when it comes to the distribution of water. I find that the leaders of these groups, such as Baba Vanley (belonging to the Shepherd community) and Rajaram Phule (of the Mali community, whose land is surrounded by the Maratha farmers in command area of Navanth) are not able to challenge the dominant Maratha farmers, and have accepted the unequal distribution of water as a way of life. It seems to me that unlike the Adivasi or Dalit farmers, these other non-dominant caste groups have compromised their position owing to their fear of losing out on a small amount of resources- in terms of land and development- by getting into confrontations with the Maratha farmers.

When I spoke to the Dalit farmer Sharad Kamble, who owns land of around ten acres in the command area of the Parvati WUA, he was not shy to express his opinion. I met Sharad during the annual meeting of the Parvati WUA. He

attended the meeting along with his brother Yogesh Kamble, who owns a land of around twenty acres in the command area of Parvati. The brothers raised the issue of the construction of a pipeline that was meant to connect their farm to the main road with the WUA. The committee members had promised this over year ago, in order to compensate for taking possession of some of their land, which had been used to build a field channel. The brothers told me that they had repeatedly asked the committee members to construct the pipeline, and they were increasingly experiencing problems loading their crop produce in the trucks or tractors to transport it to the market. However, the committee members stated that the delay was due to a lack of funding, and continued to delay the construction of the pipeline. Finally, the Kamble brothers decided to submit a written complaint to the committee members. They both submitted a written complaint to the committee members, which clearly stated that they felt that the delay in constructing their field channel was largely due to caste discrimination, and nothing else. This accusation seemed to get the attention of the committee members, who said they found it ‘disturbing’.

Later on, when I met Sharad Kamble at his farmhouse, he told me more about all the arguments and fights he’d had with dominant farmers over the years. He said that once he argued with Bajirao Patil, one of the dominant farmers in local politics, at the WUA offices. However, even a farmer like Sharad, who feels confident enough to express his views, still feels marginalized. After the interview, Sharad said that I must not to share what he had said with others, out of fear of inspiring a vengeance attack against him. (Interview with Sharad Kamble, large farmer, Parvati WUA, Rampur, in September 2012.) At this moment, I understood the oppression exercised by the dominant caste group, which makes even the most vocal members of the village fear the repercussions of any criticism aimed at the village leadership.

The conversation I had with Sharad reminded me of the conversation I had with Kadar (the Muslim famer) at his farm. I remembered the way Kadar responded to me when I asked him for his opinion about the Patil family, or, indeed, any of the upper castes. He would always try to change the subject, and was worried that people from nearby farms would be trying to listen in to

our conversation. I observed the same reaction from Patekar, the farmer from the middle-caste group.

These stories demonstrate how power is exercised by dominant caste groups, and highlight how resistance is organised and exercised by the small and marginalised farmers. In his study of the powerful Jat Farmers, who farm in the rural parts of Uttar Pradesh in India, Jeffrey (2001) talks about how power is exercised by dominant caste groups. Jeffrey argues that the Jat exercise power in numbers during political elections, and this enables them to be a close ally of the ruling parties of the State. Also, Jeffrey claims that the Jat Farmers make extra efforts to build good relationships with the local police. The Jat Farmers organise informal events for the police officers, and, in some cases, they encourage matrimonial relationships between their daughters and police officers. The Jat Farmers use their political connections, and a network of informal relationships, to exercise domination in the area. The building and strengthening of these formal and informal networks has helped the Jat to exercise their power and influence over other, non-dominant caste farmers in the village.

I found that the numerical strength of the Maratha similarly makes it a powerful caste group in the politics of the state. Secondly, influential farmers have built up good relationships with the irrigation officers, and this helps the Marathas to exercise power in the WUAs. Even though they believe there is corruption in the system, most of the villagers share a general belief that the relationships formed between the influential farmers and the irrigation officers can be used to address the issues faced by the WUA. Thirdly, the shared caste affiliations between the irrigation officers and influential farmers provide a framework within which dominant castes can further exploit their relationships with the Irrigation Department. These three factors have strengthened the influence of the influential dominant-caste farmers in the WUAs and in the village.

The non-dominant individual castes lack strength in numbers, and caste affiliations with those in state authority. Shantaram Kamble is a Dalit farmer, and an employee at the Parvati WUA. He wanted to apply for the funding of a

well, but his application was repeatedly rejected by the department. It was only when a member of the Dalit group gained a good position in the Department that his plan was eventually sanctioned. I found that it helps the lower-caste communities if the farmers are represented by a member of their own caste within the WUA and Irrigation Department administrations. However, this incident also shows how marginalised farmers experience resistance to their plans for economic expansion. The local agricultural economy is dominated by influential dominant-caste farmers in the village, and the big farmers are not inclined to share their wealth with the rest of the village. In fact, they seek to expand their empires further. The informal and formal networks established by these dominant farmers enable them to sustain and expand their economic power.

This brings us to a discussion of the issue of social capital and networks, and their significance in the functioning of the WUAs. The idea of social capital as discussed by Putnam (1994:p.167) refers to ‘trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions’. In simple terms, it means the number of people you know who can assist you in every possible way. I find that social capital plays a significant role in terms of gaining access to irrigation water. A farmer who is able to build up relationships with the WUAs officials, irrigation department officials, and other powerful farmers faces hardly any problems in maintaining his access to irrigation water. This can evidently be seen in the case of Maratha farmers who, owing to being members of a dominant caste, are more able to align themselves with, and relate to, the WUA officials- as well as irrigation officers in the area. It is through these networks of caste relationships that the dominance of the Maratha farmers is being exercised in the WUAs. As seen in the earlier chapters, right from the stage of the formation of the WUAs to its present day, it has been networking between the dominant-caste farmers that enables them to perpetuate, and gradually strengthen, their hold on the WUAs. But this is not to say that only caste relationships form a basis of social capital in the village. I find that certain non-dominant caste farmers, due to their economic position, are able to form such a network of relationships among the villagers.

I believe that in cases where the farmers lack the means to develop such social capital, they are not able to maintain their access to irrigation water. It is evident in the case of Dalit farmers, who lack adequate means and contacts to build up such social capital within the village. In the case of other non-dominant caste, I think the Mali are in much better position- both economically, as well as socially- to build up such a network of relationships. In the village, I observed that Mali are considered as being higher in social standing, compared to other non-dominant castes (such as the Shepherd and Dalit communities) in the village. Secondly, Mali farmers have also developed themselves as agriculturally advanced farmers, in terms of their use of Poly houses for the cultivation of flowers and vegetables. These two factors about the Mali farmers enable the Marathas to identify themselves more with the Mali, rather than with the Shepherds or Dalits. But such instances of networks of relationships among the Mali and Maratha farmers are few, leaving the vast majority of the non-dominant caste farmers dependent on the sympathy of the Maratha farmers in the WUAs. In a way, the idea of social capital, as criticized by Harris (2001), supports the development of the individuals and the groups that possess the adequate social and economic means to develop and sustain such a network of relationships.

8.5 Migrant struggles for social capital:

This section looks at how the village treats immigrant farmers, who are not native to the village of Rampur. Many farmers who migrate to Rampur either to work, or to live on the land they have purchased, lack social capital in the village. These newcomers need to develop exceptional relationships with the villagers in order to be accepted, and this sometimes happens, as is the case with farmers such as Gorey, Yogesh, and Neghne. These farmers have sought out and built a good relationship with the Secretary of the WUA in order to maintain access to irrigation water. Even though Pravin Gorey is a young man in his twenties, he actively takes a lead in organising events for the committee members of the WUA; during my stay, one such event supervised by Gorey was a visit by senior members of the Irrigation Department to Parvati WUA. After their visit, the team was invited for a lunch hosted at Gorey's farmhouse.

The entire organisation of the event, including the food on offer, was carried out by Pravin Pawar.

However, if a migrant farmer is not good at building these relationships, or if circumstances prevent him from doing so, farmers such as Rakesh (Parvati WUA) and Gaikwad (Lakshmi WUA) often overlook these farmers in the system. Also, there is the possibility of some form of corruption which means that some farmers are favoured over others. From the interviews I conducted and the observations I made, I found that the potential for corruption is more evident at Parvati WUA; many tail-end farmers complained about bias towards farmers living in the head region. Therefore, migrants' access to water is very uncertain and unpredictable.

The Mahabalipur Project is regularly visited by national and international teams of scholars, as well as farmers from other areas. However, the farmers' experience of these visiting teams has not been positive. Indeed, the farmers, especially those who benefit less from the WUA, think that these visits are made only to capture and promote the idea of the 'success' of the project, and that marginalised farmers are overlooked. According to the small landholding farmers, visiting teams are guided around by WUA committee members who only show them the positive side of the system, and then entertain them with tea and snacks. These teams do not visit individual farmers in the command area in order to try to understand their difficulties. In the opinion of the small landholding farmers, these teams are not interested in understanding the difficulties and conflicts related to water distribution. I found that the team's view of the project is mediated by the WUA committee.

The marginalised farmers try to identify difficulties, but their gatekeepers, who are WUA committee members, or representatives from the local NGO, do not wish to address any negative experiences. Therefore, most of the teams who visit the site leave with the image of a successful project, which they feel must be replicated in their own villages, as well as in different parts of the country, to ensure the efficient management of water. The farmers find this approach annoying, and eventually lose interest in the study teams who visit farm sites.

The small farmers feel that these visits are just routine, and that the visitors are not serious in their intentions to understand the difficulties of the small farmers in the area. The small farmers feel that their experiences carry no importance in the eyes of the developers, the NGOs working in the area, the irrigation department, the large-scale and influential farmers, or the WUA administration, etc. This leaves the smaller farmers feeling powerless and helpless. I found that the disinterested response from the farmers was because they do not feel part of the 'success' of the WUA project.

The conflicts and differences between the farmers as described in the above sections show an entirely different perspective of the WUA system. Claims made by the local NGOs and the Irrigation Department about the 'success' of WUAs is challenged by the narratives of the farmers.

8.6 Conclusion

The stories related by the small and medium landholding farmers challenges the idea of the WUA as a neutral organisation that strives to ensure the equitable distribution of water, and that helps to resolve conflicts when they occur. The narratives given show that the Associations have failed to realise their goals.

An interesting aspect of the analysis is that the rationale used by the WUA to explain their policy for resolving differences among users located along different parts of the canal system (i.e. upstream and low stream etc.) is not as simple as they suggest. An important factor that affects the distribution of irrigation water is the negotiations carried out by the farmers with the WUAs. Furthermore, the power to negotiate access to irrigation water is dependent upon caste, family connections, class and wealth, access to the bureaucracies, and relationships with the employees at the WUA offices.

The assumption that prevails about differences in water circulation and distribution between the upstream and the lower streams is not true. In the area in question, the distribution of water is not a homogenous idea that depends on geography, but is a heterogeneous process based on caste, class and farm size.

The powerful farmers, in terms of caste and landholding size, are able to enjoy access to water, irrespective of their location in the command area. Furthermore, these farmers who do not enjoy an adequate water supply mostly belong to the middle- and lower-caste groups in the village.

Thirdly, one needs to reflect back upon the role played by the WUAs in three key areas- such as water distribution, participation and empowerment, and conflict resolution. I find that caste and class domination operates 'hand in hand' in the WUAs and serves to marginalise the voices of the small and medium landholding farmers in the social set-up of the village. It is hard to imagine how the smaller farmers, irrespective of the caste differences among them, will ever be able to address the domination of the large landowning farmers in the WUA, and thereby ensure access to the irrigation water. It seems that the distribution of water now depends almost exclusively upon the desires of the large farmers and WUA employee interests. The smaller farmers have no choice but to follow the system, and adjust to it, or shift to alternative sources of water (i.e., a well; or rainwater). However, it must be understood that in a closed social and economic system such as this, it is not easy for smaller farmers to challenge the domination of the larger farmers.

This brings us to a discussion on the agenda of empowerment of small farmers through the WUA in the command area. In contrast to the idea of empowerment that the propaganda of the WUA promotes, I found that the small and medium landholding farmers in the area are susceptible to local power dynamics.

Furthermore, the policies of the Irrigation Department and the WUA fail to recognise the impact of local political, social, and caste dynamics on the administration of WUA policy. In addition to the strong influence of tradition and history in the social and political make up of Rampur, the interplay between different local interest groups adds complexity to the operation of WUAs in the area. My aim is not to undermine the importance of the idea of empowering local farmers, but to highlight that a lack of understanding, or recognition of cultural specificities- such as caste and class relationships in India- make the process of empowerment more complex.

The process of empowerment, as observed by the farmers, is not the same for every caste group in the social make-up of the village. As I observed, it is not easy for caste groups such as the Mali, the Shepherd, and the Shimpi to overthrow the burden of caste and challenge the dominance of the upper Maratha caste in the village. These groups lack what can be termed as the 'caste consciousness' that is necessary to establish alliances across the caste groups in order to challenge the domination of the Marathas within the village. This is evident in the everyday life of the village, where I found that the Mali hardly ever attend the functions of the Shepherd community, and the Shepherd community hardly ever attend the functions of the Mali farmers. The groups share the same grudge against the dominance of the Marathas, but fail to make an effort to come together on a platform to challenge it. I believe that this difference in caste consciousness existing among these different groups is a necessary element that needs to be considering while implementing the agenda of empowerment in the WUAs.

However, rather than addressing these realities, the NGOs and the Irrigation Department choose to overlook these important issues, and fail to address the actual material and social conditions that shape the everyday life of the farmers. In addition to this, the concept of social capital is entrenched in the ideology of these participatory schemes. WUA policy claims to use existing social relationships in order to achieve success. However, as Harris (2005) notes, this investment in social capital serves only to nurture existing inequalities in society.

Rather than promoting democracy in order to achieve consensus, existing social networks are being used by those who control the market in order to expand their operations to cover a larger area. Elyacher (2003) identifies this process as 'accumulation by dispossession', whereby the process of accumulation of capital goes on by dispossessing the poor of resources in the name of policies that claims to empower and developed the marginalised in the society. The markets enable the dominant class to use existing social relations and networks in society in order to deprive the poor of its claim and accumulate capital, rather than addressing the needs of the poor. It can be seen

that the water industry in India has exploited local people such as farmers, the local NGO, and the state, to spread itself out and capitalise- and this process has disempowered and dispossessed smaller farmers in the area.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction:

The study shows that the agenda of liberalisation of achieving equitable distribution of water and increasing the efficiency of the irrigation system is not achieved through WUAs. In relation to PIM reforms, my findings can be summarised under three main themes: the accessibility of irrigation water, conflicts over water resources, and the participation and empowerment of the farmers.

WUA policy states that it intends to enable the equitable distribution of water to tail-end farmers. The aim of the WUAs is to achieve equitable distribution of water across the command area of WUAs (WALMI, 2003). My study shows that, despite continuous intervention by the large landholding farmers, the system as such has been able to achieve the equitable distribution of water in the command area. I find that the water does reach a wide range of people without much hassle involved in the process. However, I have tried to move beyond an understanding of the process of water distribution as simply a technical process, whereby the intended beneficiary always receives adequate water supplies as a result of the irrigation reform process. I listened to the experiences of the farmers (mostly from the Mali and Shepherd caste) to discover how accessibility to irrigation water continues to be negotiated by dominant farmers via their wealth and authority. The WUAs have played a part in changing the terms and strategies that farmers use to gain access to water. It became evident that, prior to the PIM water reforms, farmers would have to repeatedly request water from farmers living in the upper-stream region of the command area. In the past, at Lakshmi WUA, the medium and small landholding farmers mainly belonging to the Mali and Shepherd castes used to face difficulty obtaining a continuous flow of water, owing to disruption created by upstream farmers. As noted by the middle- and lower-caste farmers, the reason for this disruption is not only because of the

geographical location of their land, but also due to the animosity and jealousy that exists between caste groups. The Maratha farmers, farming in the upper stream, used to exercise domination over the control of the flow of water by creating disruptions in the supply of water. Farmers working in both the middle and tail-end of the area sometimes have to toil day and night to bring water to their fields, and they have to continually negotiate with upstream farmers to prevent water channels being broken.

The study shows that WUAs have helped some farmers receive a more equitable share of water than they were able to obtain previously. For example, Mali farmers, especially those who farm in the middle area of the Lakshmi WUA, now consider themselves to be in better position than in the past. However, in Parvati, farmers at the tail-end continue to be deprived of the benefits of canal irrigation; they receive a limited amount of water for very short time. This mostly affects the smaller and marginalised farmers, who cultivate seasonal crops such as wheat. In Parvati, the strategies used by farmers to gain privileged access to irrigation water were more or less same as those used in other areas, but what is evident here is how the local WUA discriminates more prolifically according to class, caste, wealth, and political allegiances.

9.2 Accessibility to water

I find that WUAs have not been completely able to resolve the conflicts among the farmers in the area. The water conflicts between farmers in the command areas of both WUAs leads us onto a discussion about the relationship between the availability of water, and conflict. The main reason given by the WUAs for any conflict is the scarcity of water. However, as noted by Mehta (2005), “water scarcity cannot be merely viewed as a ‘natural’ phenomenon.” One has to understand how this phenomenon is embedded in the social and power relations shaping water use and practices. This, as well as local culture and history, must be made explicit. Similarly, Selby (2014) points out that the issue of scarcity is not the only determiner of water conflicts. Selby notes that, in Sudan, water conflicts arise due to the abundance of the resource, and political and economic factors. His study suggests there is a need

to move beyond the binary of the scarcity-abundance idea, and examine the availability of water in the larger context of the global economy, and the international processes associated with water.

My findings show that the actual volume of water available is no longer an issue because of the increased water storage capacity of the dam. Also, most of the farmers (i.e. cultivators of wheat) do not use their share of water during the winter season, when water is most abundant. However, in spite of these circumstances, it is evident that conflicts about water arise frequently in the command area of both the WUAs, especially at Parvati WUA. I found that the reasons for this were not due to the amount of water stored, but due to barriers to the distribution of water that resulted from the social and power relations shaping water usage and practices in the area, as well as the socio-political factors operating in the village. The study shows that conflicts about water also arise due to the appropriation of water by the big landowning farmers for the cultivation of grapes, and, again, these problems can be linked to power relationships among the farmers. I also found that conflicts arose due to wider-ranging problems, such as economic development and agricultural changes that have taken place nationally in India, which have affected agricultural production and irrigation in the village.

The story of ‘transformation’ as promoted by the WUAs highlights the benefits of increased amounts of dam water, but this water is distributed differently to farmers depending on their caste and landowning position in the village. This distribution process means that certain groups of farmers are now associated with growing certain crops, such as grapes, flowers, vegetables, and wheat etc. and the type of crops cultivated by individual farmers depends on the access they can acquire to infrastructure, in terms of knowledge and economic capital. In a way, the cropping patterns that have emerged in the village reflect existing social and economic hierarchies that have been prevalent within its ranks for many years. In this hierarchy, the Marathas are the leaders in terms of the production of high-priced cash crops such as grapes, followed by the Mali, who cultivate flowers and vegetables, and then other caste groups, who cultivate vegetables and wheat. It is clear that the wealthiest

landowning farmers have gained more from the process of change, and have strengthened their hold over politics in the village.

It could be argued that the story of 'transformation' is the story of growing competition among the farmers, and greater incomes for big landowning farmers. In the present context, the individual farmer tries his level best to put to use every inch of land to enhance his production. In the process, some farmers believe they have ownership and control over land on or near field channels, and they feel they have a right to use this land as they see fit. This behaviour is demonstrated by some of the big landowning farmers, who also manage to escape punishment by the WUA. The smaller and medium landholding farmers, especially those from middle and lower castes, lack the appropriate social capital to oversee the authority of the WUA. Therefore, it can be seen that the culture of the commercialisation of agriculture is increasing competition among the farmers in the village.

It became apparent that the WUAs have achieved limited success in resolving conflicts between farmers in the area. The WUAs seem to be able to manage differences among the smaller and medium landholding farmers- relating to field channels, the maintenance of said channels, and water allocation. However, they seem powerless to prevent the bad behaviour of large landowning farmers because, in these cases, the strategy of applying social pressure does not seem to work. Also, as noted in a statement by Phule Guruji, one of the committee members from Lakshmi WUA, the members do not want to involve themselves in cases of water conflicts involving big landowning farmers. The reason for this lack of involvement, as explained by these committee members, is that the village is a closed community, mediated through social and economic relationships among the villagers. These relationships can vary according to groups, such as is the case with the Adivasi farmers, who depend on the large land-owning farmers for their livelihood from agricultural labouring and contract farming. For other lower caste farmers, their livelihood depends on exchanging knowledge about the cultivation of crops, the techniques they use, or on becoming involved in

menial work related to agriculture- such as in the Panchayat offices, at the co-operative banks, and at village festivals, etc.

I found that agriculture continues to bind the farmers together in their everyday lives. The business relationships formed between the smaller farmers with the big landholding farmers helps to alleviate problems for the members of committee as well as their staff and, on the whole, the smaller farmers tried to avoid conflicts with the big landholding farmers. The institution of the WUA does not function independently of social and economic reality. The institution is very much rooted in the traditions of social reality that already existed in the village and, as such, it is difficult for the policy to succeed in resolving conflicts.

Another reason for the inability of the WUAs to resolve conflicts among the farmers, especially between grape cultivators and others, is due to the commodification of irrigation water. The WUAs gain more profits from the sale of irrigation water to grape cultivators during the summer season, compared to the profits received from the farmers who cultivate wheat. This is one of the main reasons why the WUAs prefer to maintain their silence about conflicts- due to their increasing interest in the sale of water to big farmers. In a way, the reforms have strengthened the process of capitalistic development in the agriculture sector.

Secondly, the existence of conflicts shows, as Foucault argues, that the process of neo-liberalisation encourages competition and transforms values among human beings, who become 'homo-economicus', in that they begin apply rational and economic values to the use of available resources (Fletcher,2010). The capitalistic development of agriculture in the village has triggered a change in society. A culture of competition has been accelerated among farmers, who now seek to appropriate field channels to enhance their profits, and deny their access to others. Therefore, as noted by Selby, water conflicts are not about the scarcity or abundance of water; they relate, rather, to the social and economic context.

9.3 Participation and Empowerment

The policy of the WUAs emphasises the participation of farmers in the management of the canal, recovering water charges, making schedules of water distribution, and making decisions about water allocation etc. WUAs and the Irrigation Department use the language of co-operation, and state that farmers should be partners in the process of development.

However, I found that the process of decision making continues to be dominated by the big landowning farmers, and there is inequality in power relations among the farmers in this respect. Farmers belonging to dominant castes wield considerable enough economic power to continue to dominate the functioning of the WUAs. The participation of farmers belonging to lower castes, and women, seems to exist only on paper, and not in reality. Representation by lower-caste groups and women is given ‘lip service’, but any committee members from the lower-caste groups, and/or women, lack real power to challenge the authority of the dominant farmers. There is a government incentive of twenty thousand rupees if WUAs form a committee with a consensus among the farmers, without having to conduct elections; and this has served to further empower dominant farmers in the area. This ‘politics of consensus’ gives power to the dominant farmers to influence nominations for the managing committees of WUAs.

Also, even when given the opportunity, some farmers, especially the lower-caste small landholding farmers, did not want to participate in the process of decision making, due to economic limitations. In some ways, these farmers demonstrated the desire to be governed, rather than become part of body governing them. The smaller landholding farmers seemed more concerned about receiving their share of water, and if this wish was satisfied, they were less interested in attending the meetings and other official procedures of the WUAs. These findings raise questions surrounding the issue of neo-liberal subjectivity, and the logic of building entrepreneurship among individuals who are capable of taking care of themselves (Gooptu, 2013). I found that the idea of self-government was conducive to farmers who were already powerful, because they already had the time and the means to engage in participation.

However, the smaller farmers, who lacked time and economic capital, could not engage in participation to the extent that the big landholding farmers did because, for the bigger farmers, participation was also a leisure activity. Therefore, I found that the language of participation in conditions of the inequitable distribution of resources did not work for the benefit of the small landholding farmers. Also, the study showed that the lack of active participation by women and small and lower-caste communities in decision-making processes, means that the WUAs have become a facility for 'governing', as pointed out by Chatterjee (2004). The idea of participation and social justice is something that is distributed by the different funding agencies, through NGOs and the State.

The process of participation is a system of multi-layered distributions of power using networks and social capital. The dominance of the Marathas is not exercised merely by 'being dominant', but through a closed network of contacts developed among WUAs staff and the irrigation bureaucracy of the government. The 'propaganda' agenda of the WUAs- to form an apolitical organisation- can be identified with the logic of the anti-politics machine, as discussed by Chotray (2011) on watershed development in India (which strengthens the role of bureaucracy, and elite farmers). Bureaucracy continues to enjoy an important place in the process of the allocation and distribution of water. Although WUA policy claims to transfer the power to farmers, and give them equal status with the Irrigation Department, farmers continue to lack the authority to seek explanations from the Irrigation Department. For example, the farmers have still not been able to get information about the leakages in the canal, and the dead stock of water. The Irrigation Department remains unaccountable in terms of the demands made by the farmers.

I found that the policy of PIM, and its emphasis on participation, needs to be reviewed in the light of the agenda for the commodification of water, as practiced under neoliberal regimes. As noted by Boulding (1999), participation has been on the agenda of the reforms process since colonial times in India. Colonial governments favoured productive irrigation (a system that placed emphasis on supporting crops that ensured revenue) over

protective irrigation (a system designed to support farmers in times of drought or famine). The motive for supporting productive irrigation was to increase revenues earned by the state, and as a result, the colonial government decided to promote user-group participation for water management. This agenda is quite evident from the recommendations given by the Visheverary Committee, formed in 1940s, which suggest the formation of user groups, to reduce the burden of economic expenditure incurred by the state on the maintenance of the system. The committee suggested that the user groups would not only be able to take care of the canal, but would also be able to collect revenue from the farmers.

My study found that WUA policy seems to be concerned more with the collection of charges, rather than with actually empowering farmers, or carrying out an agenda of social justice, in terms of the allocation of water to the farmers in the tail-end, and to marginalised groups. The commodification of water seems to be a priority of the reforms, and the agenda of participation is secondary. As suggested by Boulding (1999), the process of neo-liberalisation is a continuation of the liberal agenda of economy carried out by the colonial government. However, by relating the reforms to the colonial agenda of enhancing revenues, I have not discarded the significance of participation. I believe it is necessary to promote and realise meaningful participation, but the policy needs to be focused on the user, and take into account the social and economic contexts.

A discussion of neo-liberal reforms throws into relief the role of the NGO and the way they act to address realities. I found that the NGO has now become an agency that works with the state to facilitate the process of policy implementation. The NGO do not stand for empowerment and justice; instead; they approach issues according to convenience- they do not take a stance that leads them into confrontation or contradiction with existing power structures. As seen in the case of the local NGO at SPK, they have boundaries to the extent to which they challenge issues. This is the logic that seems to govern the functioning of the NGOs these days. However, the NGOs are still trying to fight for the rights of farmers within the limitations of these boundaries to a

certain extent, but, overall, the NGOs avoid controversial issues such as gender and caste.

It became evident from stories related to the formation of WUAs in the village that the NGO played a significant role in terms of helping the farmers, and training them to establish WUAs. However, the NGO failed to tackle issues relating to women and lower-caste communities such as the ex-untouchables. Parvati WUA is dominated by upper-caste men, and the representation given to women only pays 'lip service' to the policy of participation, rather than demonstrating real concerns about gender and class issues. The NGO does not challenge this 'understanding' among the members, and, instead, is in consonance with the WUA. Similarly, on the issue of caste, I found that the NGO lacks serious orientation and engagement with the caste question. This lack of enthusiasm about the caste question among the NGOs might be due to the NGOs' unwillingness to take on important challenges, and to question the existing social structures of power. I found that the NGOs understand the nature of the caste question, but, due to increasing competition among the NGOs for funding, they prefer to focus on the outcomes of major projects in the area. However, I also agree with Bebbington et al. (2007) that a lack of economic resources has constrained NGO engagement with the agenda of transformation. I think it is important for NGOs to develop their own sources of funding in order to sustain themselves, so that they can carry out the social transformation they seek to achieve. Currently, however, this is a significant challenge in the given context of NGOs.

The study shows, as argued by Mosse (2005) that participation is a continuous process marked by the vested interests of different actors involved in it. Understanding participation as a process helps us to know the way different actors exercise their power, and thereby influence said process. It shows, as argued by Foucault, the way power is exercised at different level by different actors, and consolidated in one person or at one level. Foucault's understanding of power helps us to understand the way control is exercised by the dominant section in the society- through a network of social and economic relationships among its group members. It shows the way the dominant

groups, through these networks, safeguard their own interests in society. But at the same time, one also finds that even the small, poor farmers also exercise some influence on the process of participation, through their resistance against the domination of the most powerful actors in the WUAs. In a way, the process of participation has made the terrain of WUAs a contestation among the different actors involved in it.

9.4 Domination, Participation and liberalization of the economy:

WUA policy devolves the function of water distribution to local institutions, and believes that local farmers are willing and able to manage water in the command areas. Secondly, the local nature of WUAs enables the organisation to measure the needs of farmers according to what crops they cultivate. Thirdly, local farmers now know they are more closely involved in enhancing the efficiency of the process of water distribution, and minimizing losses in terms of percolation and excess use of water. However, the policy does not consider the ways in which local actors- especially the dominant caste farmers; mostly men- enact and shape the institutions according to their own conveniences.

I found that the decentralisation of the irrigation sector through PIM has not reduced this influence, but has instead actually made it covert among the users, and the employees of the associations. The overt forms of corruption are no less free of social discrimination, endorsing the employees of the WUAs with more authority in terms of allocation of water to the users. The claim of accountability and corruption-free administration of the irrigation sector has not been completely achieved by the PIM policy. In a way, as observed during my interactions with the people- especially small farmers across the caste groups-, they appreciate the value of role played by the officials of irrigation department rather than the current employees of the WUAs.

According to small farmers across the WUAs, the means of corruption used by this group in the past is no longer of any use in terms of maintaining one's access to irrigation water. Its scope has been narrowed down to a particular group of people who enjoy an influential position in the village. The position

of canal inspector, once considered to be a neutral position by the villagers, has now become a highly politicised and contested position, in terms of regulating the use of water by the farmers. It is observed that most of the staff employed in the WUA comes from the dominant Maratha caste, which invariably adds to strength of that community.

The strategy used by the dominant-class farmers in terms of recruiting gatekeepers in Karnataka, as observed by Pattenden (2011), is to some extent similar to the process of recruitment of the WUAs employee. For example, in the cases of the appointment of Secretary and Clerk of the Parvati WUAs. The Secretary belongs to the middle rank of dominant-caste farmers with an adequate amount of land. The Clerk belongs to the lower rank of dominant-caste, in terms of his holding a small plot of land in the village. The interaction between the two, as described in Chapter 5, denotes the way that- despite the difference in terms of class and location- both Secretary and Clerk work in consensus of each other, each safeguarding the other's interest in the WUA. A very similar chain of WUA members is observed in the administrative hierarchy in the WUAs. The dominant-cast members, irrespective of their class differences, ensure that through a well-established network among the irrigation officers, the interest of their community is articulated in the WUAs.

The presence of a strong network and strength in the WUAs, as observed during my fieldwork, guarantees an assured amount and supply of water to the dominant-caste farmers, irrespective of any concerns for the needs of the other farmers in the command area. The incidence of possible conflict among the two WUAs in two different villages in Chapter 4 demonstrates that, in the case of any negligence in terms of the supply of water, it is the non-dominant caste groups that receive the blame for it, giving a clean chit to the dominant-caste farmers in the area. The presence of dominant-caste employees within the WUAs' members shows that people with their own caste-representative member in the association have, in a way, cornered the other benefits of the policy of PIM. I observed that the scheme of making pesticides or fertilizers available through the WUAs is mostly availed of by the dominant-caste members of the WUAs. It is ensured that information about this availability is

properly circulated among the group, and accordingly the subsidized good is transferred to this group's own community members. The other interesting aspect of the influence of dominant-caste farmers in the WUA is the ready availability of the information about various schemes offered to farmers by the State government. Apart from these economic gains, the domination in the WUAs is also a way of ensuring your political support among the farmers. As narrated in the Chapter 6, the story of victory of the WUA President leads to extra privileges for the farmers who supported and actively took part in his election campaign.

In terms of domination, the Mali farmers and other non-dominant caste farmers no longer have to deal directly with powerful farmers, but they still have to negotiate water access with the Secretary of the WUA, who usually belongs to an upper-level caste. The strategy applied by the Mali farmers, as seen at Lakshmi, is to build good informal relationships with the Secretary, and try to keep him happy in order to maintain access to water. There is still opportunity for some corruption between the farmers and the Secretary, but this is not explicit, and farmers avoided commenting on this. However, powerful farmers still continue to manipulate the control of water, by delaying turns to other farmers or negotiating inconvenient time schedules for water distribution to other castes. Although these strategies may appear trivial, they are used by higher-caste farmers to exercise their influence and power over WUAs and farmers; they also use family networking to maintain power within the irrigation sector.

It is in this way we find that the economic policy in terms of the water reforms is socially embedded in the given context. The claims made by the neo-liberal policies to create a self-regulated market independent of social and political interference seems to be unrealistic, as the market continues to function through its given social and economic hierarchies in the local context. Institutions such as WUAs, created to regulate the use of water, continue to be embedded in the existing social context marked by differences such as caste, class and gender, reproducing the pattern of dominance in society. Therefore, as pointed out by Jayal (2006), one needs to look at the cultural aspect of the

process of decentralization to understand that it is not just a process that serves interest of a particular class, but also a particular culturally affluent section in society. It is in this way that the liberalisation agenda of efficiency & equitability and participation are related with each other. As pointed out in Chapter 5, the WUAs continue to be a new avenue of power for the influential dominant-class and -caste male members in the village. It negates the voice of women; small and marginalised farmers coming from the Dalit community, and other lower-caste members in the WUA. To me, the process of participation- despite its own success in a limited way- appears, as observed by Wright (2005), to be 'an ideology of the exploited', where the inclusion of the interest of the exploited in the ideology of the exploiters is a necessary means to accommodate and keep check on the ability of the exploited to counter and challenge the oppression, possibly leading to class conflict for establishment of an egalitarian society.

9.5 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

Although I endeavoured to fully understand the formation and functioning of WUAs, it was necessary to apply limits to my study. This study tried to understand the process and implementation of WUAs in a local context, and it explored the way local politics shape the functioning of the WUAs. The study evaluated the extent to which the goals of WUA policy have been realised in terms of enabling the equitable access of irrigation water to local farmers in a specific village. However, expanding the scope of the study to make connections with policy formulation and implementation at higher national levels, and at an international level- at institutions such as the World Bank, for example- would help discover the way power is articulated by different actors at different levels, and its influence on the wider processes of implementation.

Furthermore, I did not interview any female landowners; owing to the gendered nature of village society, it was difficult gain access to them. Therefore, I was unable to gain much insight into women's participation in the irrigation sector. I believe a detailed study on women's role in the irrigation sector is necessary in order to understand the larger gender implications of the agenda of neo-liberal change in the water sector. Additionally, I feel there is a

need to carry out a study into NGO engagement with the issue of social justice at a higher level, and, specifically, in the water sector. Specifically, there is a need to discover more about the way NGOs work with WUAs and the Irrigation Department, and about their approach to and methods for achieving the goal of social justice.

Appendix One: List of farmers interviewed

- Bajirao Vadge, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-02-12
- Chamanrao, small farmer, Maratha, LakshmiWUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-09-12
- Balasaheb Patil and his son Balasmall farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 18-02-12
- Kashinath Negne, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 18-02-12
- Chandan Patil, small farmer, Maratha, LakshmiWUA member, Rampur, interview on 18-02-12
- Tatya Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 19-02-12
- Gopi Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 19-02-12
- Raju Joshi, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 20-02-12
- Samant Gaikwad, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 20-02-12
- Narayan Wagh, small farmer, Mali, Laskshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 20-02-12
- Ramrao Wagh, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 01-03-12
- Vinayak Patil, small farmer, , Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 01-03-12
- Nagraj Khode, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 01-03-12
- Motiram Patil, and his son YogeshPatil, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 03-03-12
- Parshram Tidke, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 04-03-12
- Tatya Vanale, small farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 04-03-12

- Dephle, small farmer, Shepherd, Saptsrung WUA member, Rampur, interview on 05-03-12
- Rakesh Phule (having a poly house)small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 05-02-12
- Gotya Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 06-03-12
- Haridas Phule, (member of the Lakshmi managing committee)small farmer, , Mali, Saptsrung WUA member, Rampur, interview on 06-03-12
- Balkrishna Raghunath Khode, medium farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 12-05-12
- Ravinder Kashinath Phule, medium farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 12-05-12
- Bhaurao Devram Patil, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 12-05-12
- Pandrinath Mahadev Thidke, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 12-05-12
- Dagu Eknath Thidke, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 12-05-12
- Vasant Shankarao Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 13-05-12
- Shankar Khode, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 13-05-12.
- Guruji Yashwant Phule, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 13-05-12
- Manoj Rajaram Phule, large farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 13-05-12
- Bajirao Kishan Gore, medium farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 14-05-12
- Umesh Vanaley, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 14-05-12
- Ganesh Punde, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 14-05-12
- D.K.Patil, large farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur interviewed on 14-05-12

- Arun Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 21-05-12
- Valurambhau Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 14-05-12
- Rakesh Phule, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 15-05-12
- Raosaheb Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 15-05-12
- Kamnakar Tatya, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 15-05-12
- Dattarey MahadeoTidke, samll farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 15-05-12
- Dileep Joshi, samll farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 17-05-12 and 02-06-12.
- Madhav Deple, medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 19-05-12
- Keshav Baburao Patil and brother Kailash Baburao Patil (DY.no.2 Ambe road)
- Vijay Govardhan, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 20-05-12
- Sunil Gore (Gore mama), medium farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 20-05-12
- Rajiv Govardhane, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 20-05-12
- Jagan Nath Tukaram Tidke (son) father (Tukaram Tidke), small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 20-05-12
- Praveen Pawar and his Father Guruji(pipeline story), medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 21-05-12
- Yashvant Bahurao Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 21-05-12
- Sharad Thorat, small farmer, Mratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-05-12
- Bhaurao Pallade, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-05-12

- Klumkar Baba, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-05-12
- Comrade Vikram Kulkarni, medium farmer, Brahmin, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-05-12.
- Tanaji Phule, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-05-12.
- Bhaurao Vanaley, small farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-05-12
- Anasaheb Pandrinath Kamble (brother of S.R Kamble), small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-05-12
- Samrath Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-05-12
- Phakirao Maure, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-05-12.
- Mukund Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 29-05-12.
- Anil Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 29-05-12.
- Shamrao Kadam, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 30-05-12
- Shaebrao Zulekar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 29-05-12.
- Jaganath Klumkar, small farmers, Maratha, Kurnooli, interviewed on 01-05-12.
- Jagdish Sirsagar, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 01-06-12.
- Yogesh Klumkar, large farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 01-06-12
- Dyneshwar Jadav, agricultural labour, Rampur, interviewed on 01-06-12
- Rajaram Phule, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 01-06-12.
- Pravin Gorey, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA, Rampur, interview on 01-06-12

- Farmer, medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 01-06-12.
- Nagnath Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 01-06-12
- Patil Baba, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 01-06-12.
- Sunil Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 29-05-12.
- Mukesh Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 01-06-12.
- Sanjay Bhaskar Patil, small farmer, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 02-06-12.
- Satish Mandalik and his Brother, small farmer, OBC, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 02-06-12.
- Manikrao Kurpe, medium farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 02-06-12.
- Milind Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Pravati WUA member, interviewed on 02-06-12.
- Bahiyasaheb Balasaheb Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 02-06-12
- Sunil Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 02-06-12.
- Laxaman Gavit, agricultural labour, farneing on contract basis, Adivasi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 02-06-12
- Dadabhau Shankar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12
- Suresh Mogre, small farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12
- Dattu Zade, small farmer, OBC, Parvati WUA member, Moadi, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12
- Lahnu Phule, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12.
- Sunil Phule, medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12.

- Baburao Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 03-06-12
- Punjaram Mogre, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12.
- Rajendra Vithal Thorat, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, former employee of the WUA, interviewed on 04-06-12.
- Cashmere Gadi, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12
- Balashaeb Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12
- Sahebrao, agricultural labour, farming on rent, Surgana interviewed on 04-06-12
- Ramesh Patkar, small farmer, Shimpi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12.
- Kuldeep Vasant Kashi, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12
- Hirsh Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 04-06-12.
- Pawar Baba, agricultural labour, Adivasi, interviewed on 20-06-12, 21-06-12
- Tanaji Klumkar (first meeting at sonawane shop 20.06.12 number 2), small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12.
- Shankar Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 21-06-12
- Pawar Baba, agriciutlrallabour, Adivassi, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 21-06-12
- Aba Nehere, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 21-06-12
- Tanaji Nehere, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-06-12
- Vinayak Nehere, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-06-12
- Sharad Rajaram Mogre, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-06-12

- Avinash Rangnath Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-06-12.
- Satish Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 22-06-12.
- Dyneshwar Charuskar, small farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-06-12
- Patil family (old ozar road), medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-06-12
- Uttam Jain (Secretary CPI M), land less labour who occupied land, Jain, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 23-06-12
- Leelabai Kandurao Suryavanshi, small farmer, Adivassi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Nilesh Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Somnath Gumbade, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12
- Nandu Suryavanshi and his wife, large farmer, Adivassi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12
- Deepak Pawar (Parvati), medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Ramrao Dada Pawar, medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Laxman Bhagwant Pawar son: Keshav .L. Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Shivaji Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 24-06-12.
- Haridas Narayan Pawar, landlesslabour, Adivasi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 25-06-12
- Kailash Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interviewed on 25-06-12.
- Sirjerao Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12
- Shankar Trimbhak Gadge, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12.

- Rakesh Klumkar, large farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12.
- Dehpale Company (does the farming on relatives land), small farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12.
- Duttarey Shivaji Klumkar(son) (father is peon in school and brother is in it peon), small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12
- Balasaheb Dikaji Klumkar, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12
- Jagan Klumkar, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 25-06-12
- Mr.Palkhed (Khadak Sukena Road), medium farmer, Maratha, Khadak Sukena interviewed on 25-06-12.
- Dileep Baburao Pawar (son of Babu Abaji Pawar), small farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Santosh Kamble (son), small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Sanjay Selke (owner) Tulsiram Gavit and his son Suresh Gavit (Batai), medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Bhimrao Uttamrao Patil, medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Dattarey Trimbhak Gadgil (old man), medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Balu Soniram Gavit (son of Gavit member of body), medium farmer, Shepherd, Lakshmi WUA member, interviewed on 26-06-12.
- Parshram Kasinath Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 27-06-12.
- Subhas Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Navanath WUA member, interviewed on 27-06-12.
- Kachru Devaram Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 27-06-12.
- Ravinder Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 27-06-12.
- Satish Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 27-06-12.

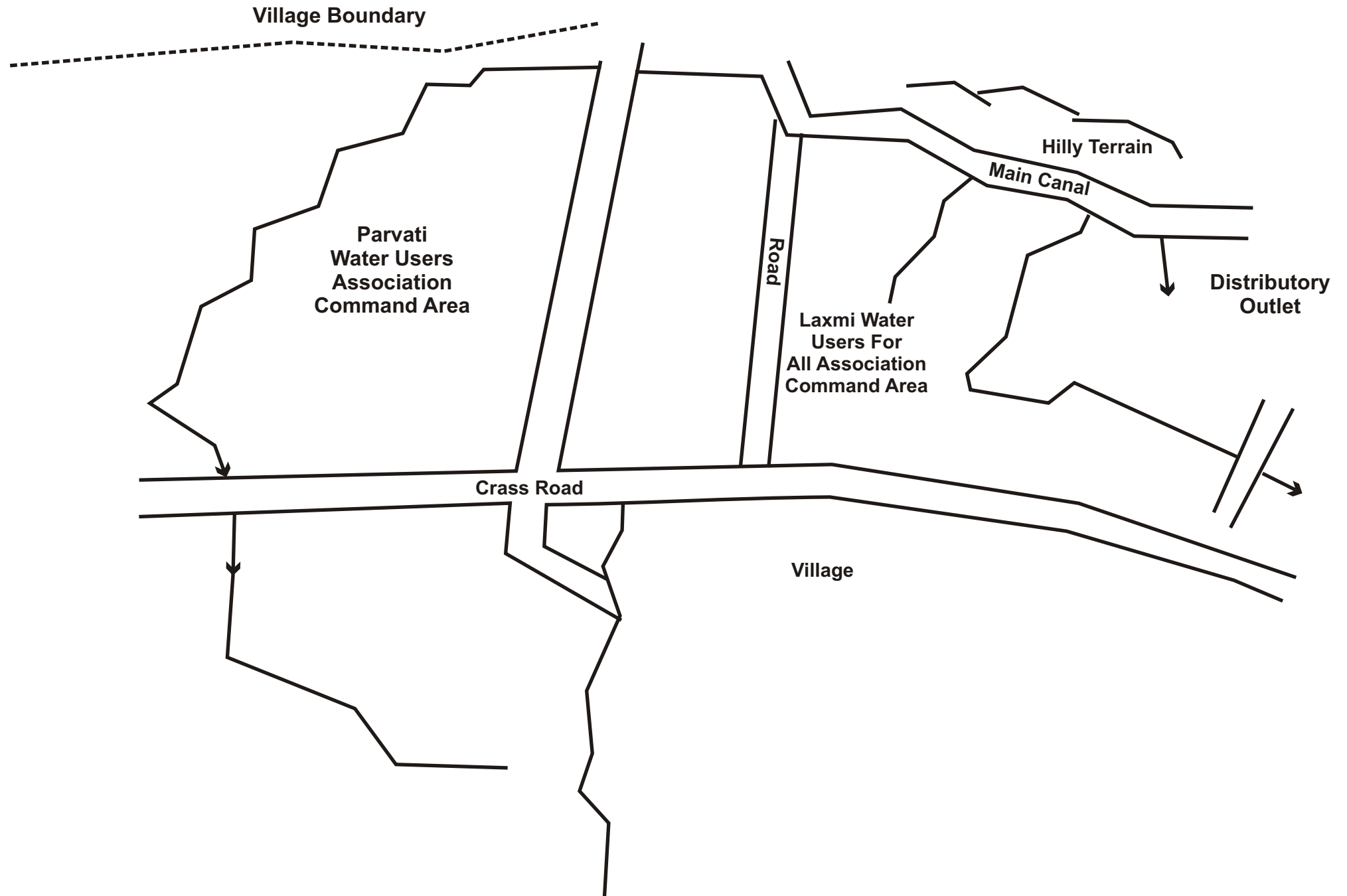
- Amol Patekar, small farmer, Shimpi, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 29-06-12
- Ashok G, aikwad, landless labour, Adivasi, Parvati WUA member, interviewed on 29-06-12
- Yogesh Balasaheb Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, on 29-06-12
- Narayan Mahadeo Pawar, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, on 29-06-12
- Shivaji Donduram Pekhale, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member on 29-06-12
- Jitendra Sitaram Chauvan and Mauley (taking care of jitendra farms and relative of Suryavanshi), small farmer, Parvati WUA member, Rampur on 12-07-12
- Dileep Sitaram Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, on 12-07-12
- Shoba Sanjay Patil director of Parvati (Sanjay Vinayak Patil wife), medium farmer, Maratha, Rampur, on 14-07-12
- Balasaheb Ganpat Thorat, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 14-07-12
- Chindu Govardhane, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 14-07-12
- Vijay Kachru Khode (son of Kachru Pandurang Khode), small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, interview on 14-07-12
- Sudhakar Naryan Kamble, medium farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 14-07-12
- Karbhari Bhikaji Kamble (and his sister), small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 14-07-12
- Balu Kamble and Ahirrao, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 14-07-12
- Shamrao Kashinath Bagul (son) Bhimrao, small farmer, Adivasi, Parvati WUA member, interview on 15-07-12
- Ganesh Boraste, large farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 15-07-12

- Motiram Chander Patil, agricultural labour, take land on rent for farming, Parvati WUA member, interview on 16-07-12
- Balasaheb Amruta Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-07-12
- Janardhan Balasaheb Patil and his son Pravin J. Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-07-12
- Shivaji Subhas Gaikwad, agricultural labour, does contract farming on Bhaurao Patil land, Adivasi, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 17-07-12
- Sunil Thakar, agricultural labour, Adivasi, Rampur, interview on 17-07-12
- Shiva Patil, small farmer, Maratha, employee of PLA, Parvati WUA member, interview on 17-07-12, 28-08-12
- Sukhdeo Dehple son Sunil Dehple, small farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, interview on 17-07-12
- Bandu Vinayak Patil son of Vinayak Patil, medium farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 17-07-12
- Balkrishna Anandrao Kamble, small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 14-08-12
- Balu Kandwe, agricultural labour, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 14-08-12 farming on Bandu Joshi land.
- Jayram Gangurde, agricultural labour, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on (bataibandujoshi) interview on 15-08-12
- Umesh Pawar, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 15-08-12
- Kailash Nehere, small farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, interview on 16-08-12
- Ganpat Namdeo Govardhane, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-08-12
- Gangadarhan Namdeo Govardhane, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-08-12
- Dagadu Triumbak Phule, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 16-08-12
- Sadashiv Rama Kamble (retired HAL), small farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 16-08-12

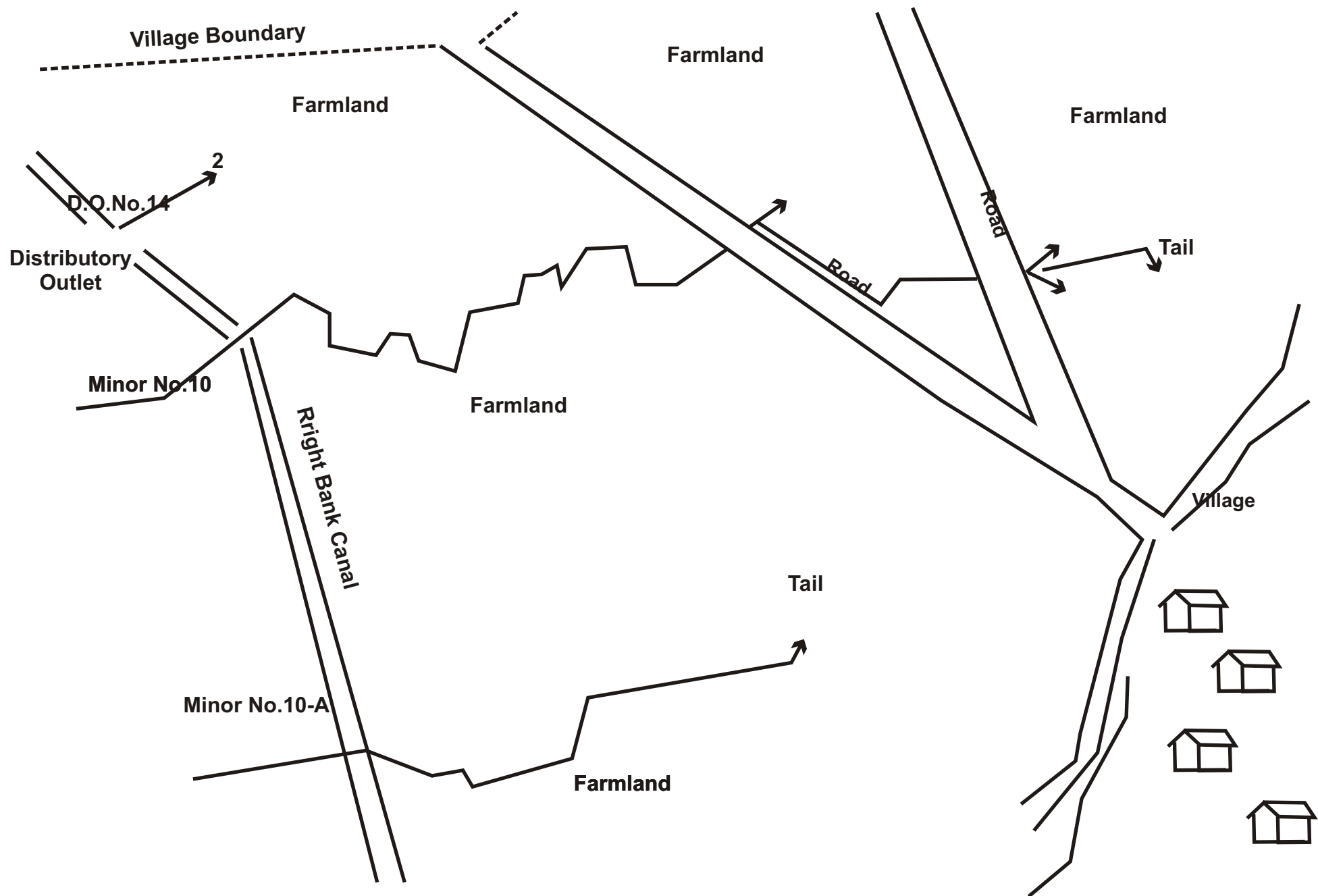
- Somanth Tamke, agricultural labour, contract farming, Parvati WUA member, Rampur interview on 24-08-12
- Gangurde, loading rickshaw driver, Dalit, Rampur, interview on 24-08-12
- Govind Phule, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 29-08-12
- Kadar Mohammad Pakhir, medium farmer, Muslim, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 30-08-12
- Triambhak Mogre, medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 03-09-12
- Balasaheb Rambhau Dephele (managing body Parvati), medium farmer, Shepherd, Parvati WUA member, member of Managing committee of Navanth WUA, interview on 03-09-12
- Ravi Chavan, agricultural labour, Adivasi, Rampur contract farming on ShekharPatil land interview on 03-09-12
- Shekhar Patil, large farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur interview on 03-09-12
- Kailash Zopade, agricultural labour, contract farming on Kamble land, Parvati WUA member, 05-09-12
- Sharad Kamble, medium farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, interview on 11-09-12
- Subhas Mauley, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Moahdi, interview on 12-09-12
- Ganesh Mauley, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Moahdi, interview on 12-09-12
- Ravinder Khode, small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Moahdi, interview on 12-09-12
- Balasaheb Tukaram Klumkar, small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 13-09-12
- Nagraj Phule, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 13-09-12
- Sahebrao Patil, , small farmer, Maratha, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 13-09-12
- Bhaskar Kashinath Patil, small farmer, Maratha, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 13-09-12

- Prakash Phule. Small farmer, Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 15-09-12
- Balasahbe Phule, small farmer, , Mali, Lakshmi WUA member, Rampur, interview on 15-09-12
- Devidas Govardhane, medium farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, Rampur, interview on 15-09-12
- Malti Lahunu Govardhane, small farmer, Mali, Parvati WUA member, , interview on 15-09-12
- Siddhartha Kamble, large farmer, Dalit, Parvati WUA member, , interview on 16-09-12

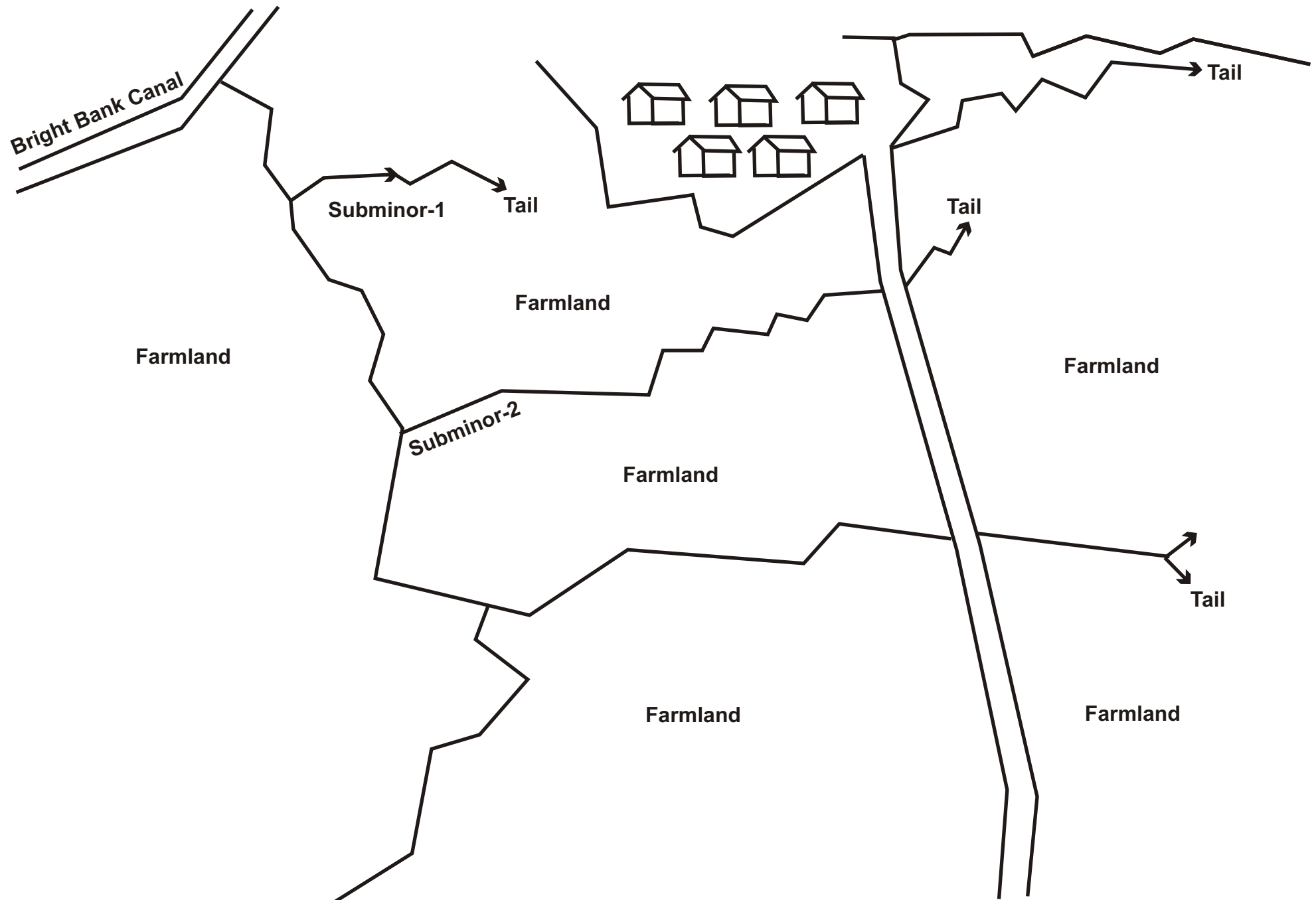
COMMAND AREA OF LAXMI WUA & PARVATI WUA



MAP OF LAXMI WATER USERS ASSOCIATION COMMAND AREA



MAP OF PARVATI WATER USERS ASSOCIATION COMMAND AREA



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